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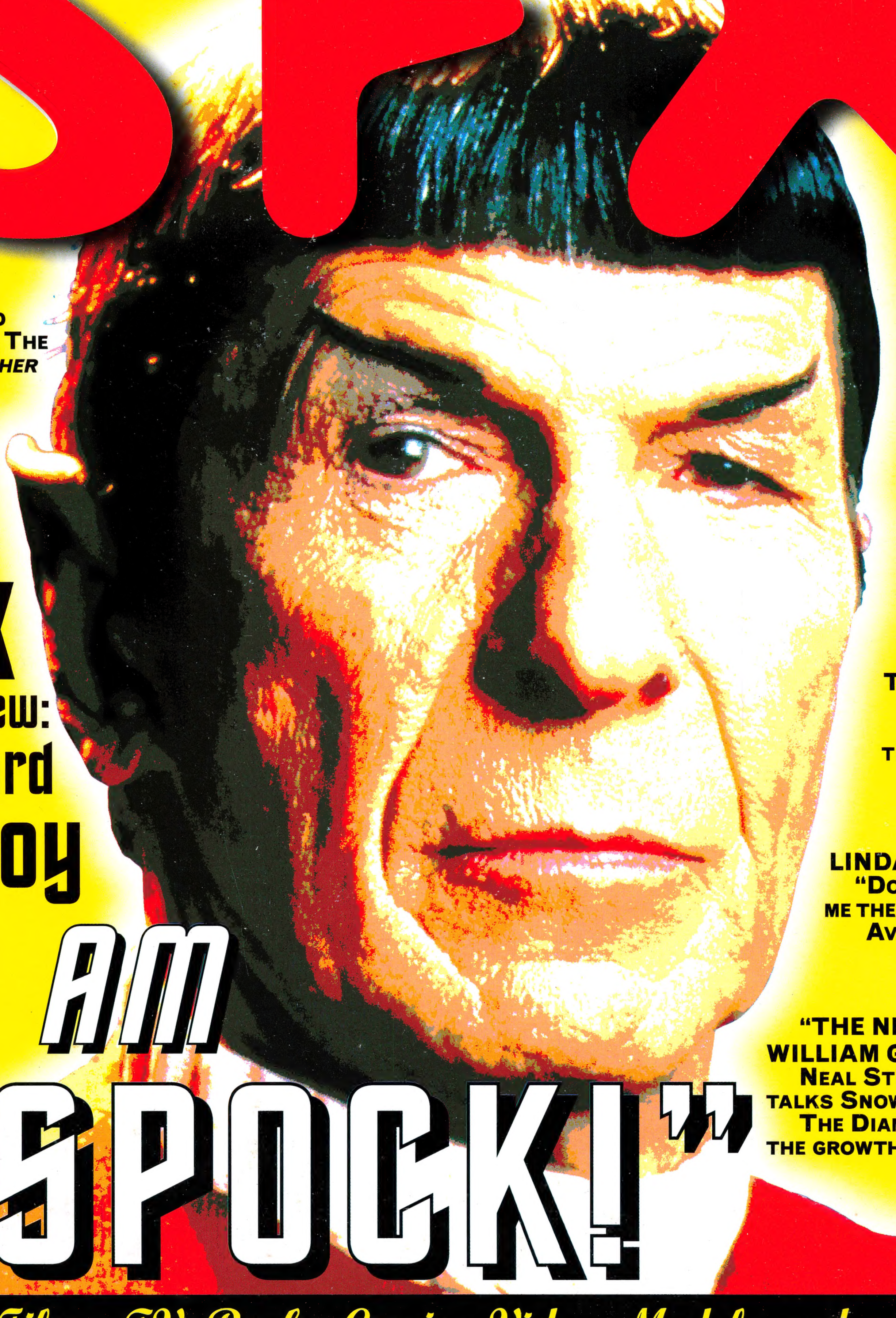
#8

Adventures in Science Fiction

JANUARY 1996 £3

"HE SIMPLY COULD NOT BELIEVE HIS EARS." (SPOCK, FROM "THE TROUBLE WITH TRIBBLES.")

SFX



X-MEN
KRYCEK AND SKINNER, THE X-FILES' *OTHER* AGENTS

The SFX Interview: Leonard Nimoy

"I AM SPOCK!"

INTO THE TWO-TONE VORTEX
TUMBLING THROUGH THE TIME TUNNEL

LINDA THORSON
"DON'T CALL ME THE FORGOTTEN AVENGER!"

"THE NEW WILLIAM GIBSON?"
NEAL STEPHENSON TALKS SNOW CRASH, THE DIAMOND AGE & THE GROWTH OF NANOTECH

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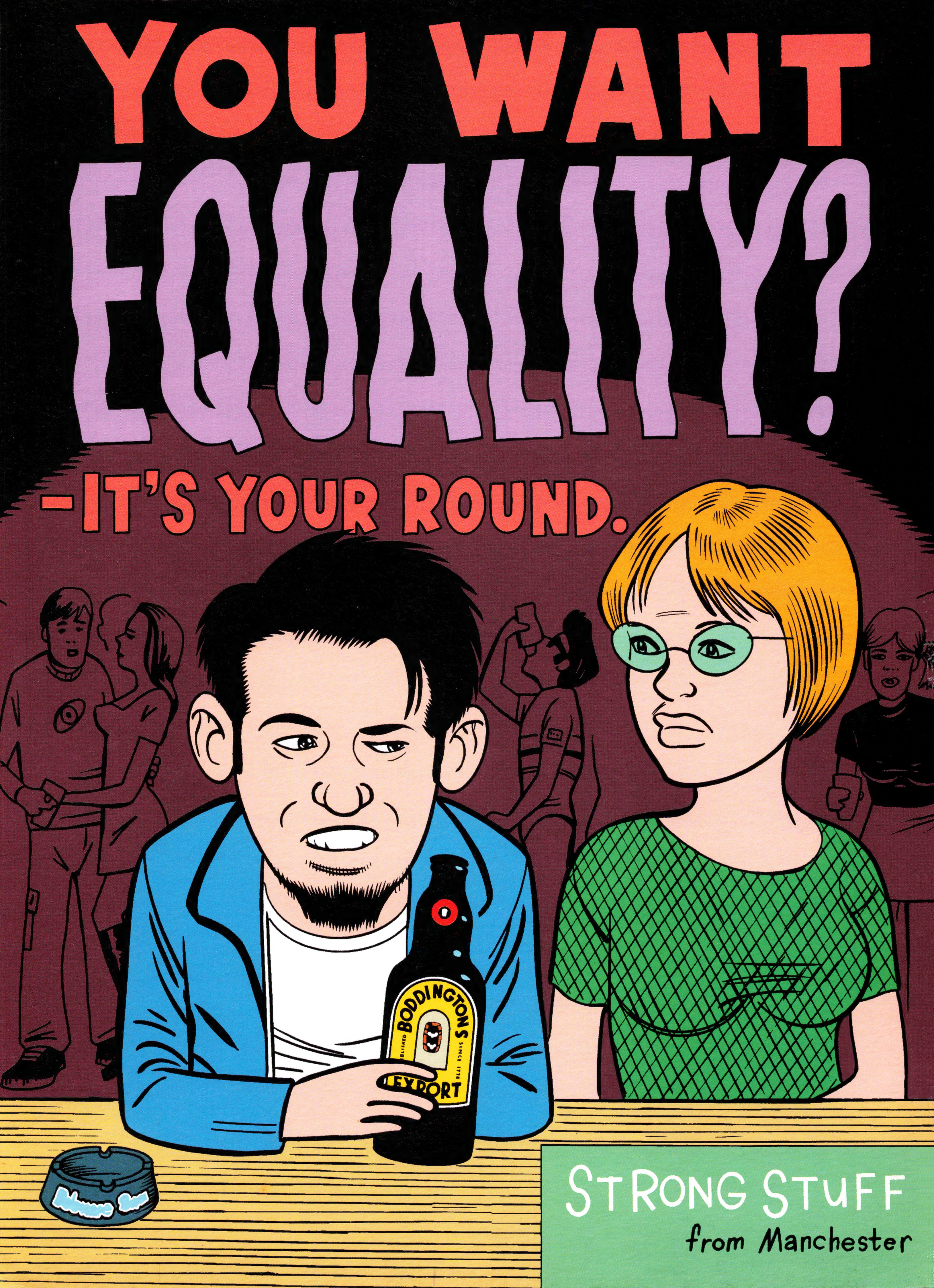
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#8 January 1996

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SFX recommends: It's been a quiet month SF-wise, but respect to *Babe* the pig, the highly sussed *Thermal Lance* fanzine, and big woolly gloves! Roll on 1996! We can't wait for *Twelve Monkeys*, *Space: Above and Beyond*, season three of *B5*...

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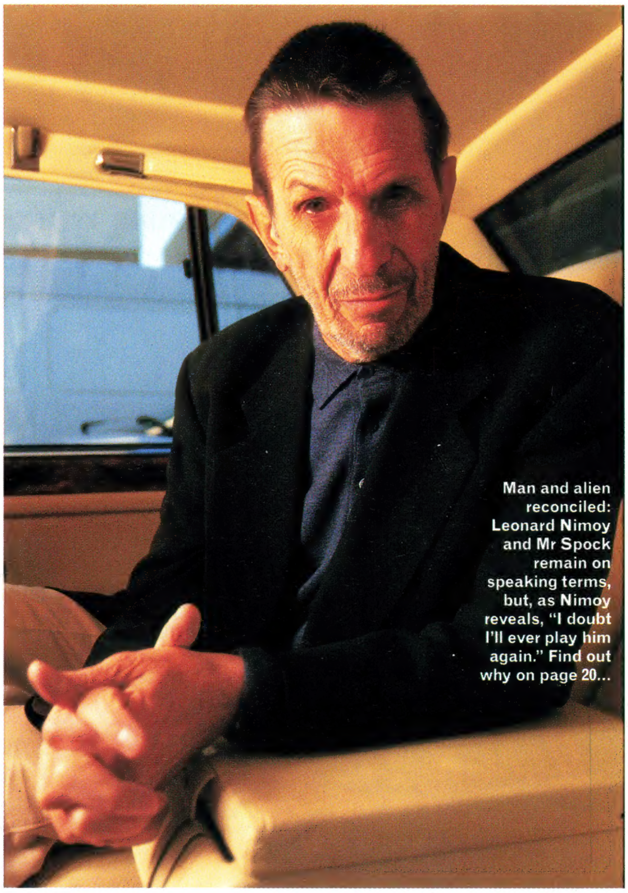
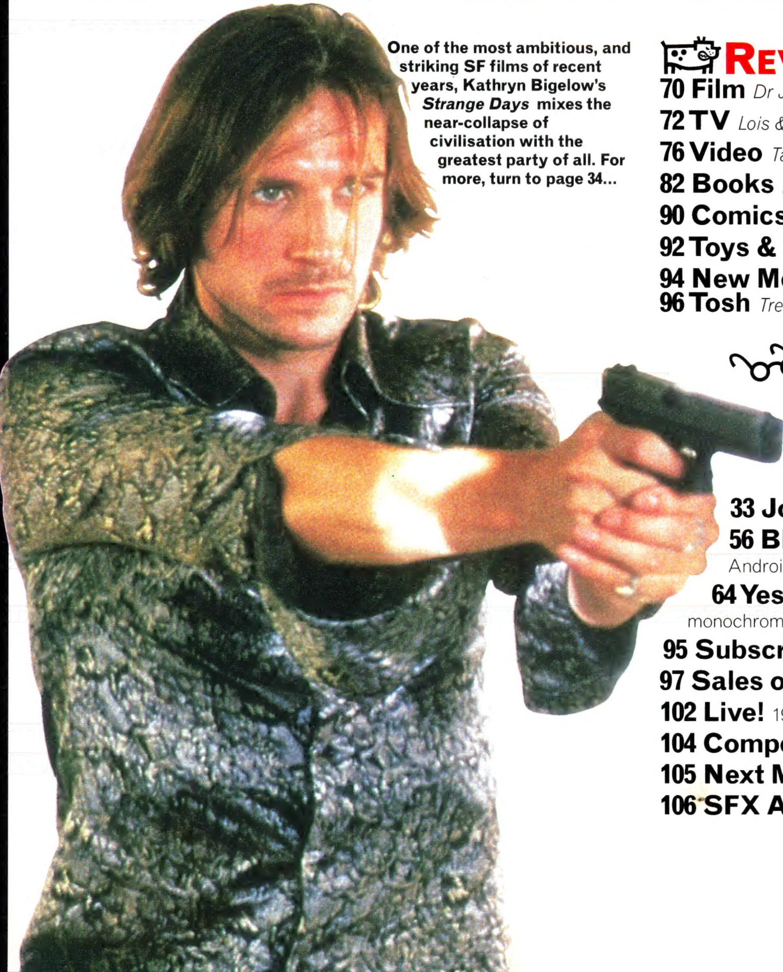

Man and alien reconciled: Leonard Nimoy and Mr Spock remain on speaking terms, but, as Nimoy reveals, "I doubt I'll ever play him again." Find out why on page 20...


One of the most ambitious, and striking SF films of recent years, Kathryn Bigelow's *Strange Days* mixes the near-collapse of civilisation with the greatest party of all. For more, turn to page 34...

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Rian Hughes

STRANGE TALES

FUTURISTIC SCIENCE STORIES ABOUND IN THIS MONTH'S BUMPER BATCH OF STRANGE TALES, INCLUDING RAY BRADBURY ON THE RADIO, SF AT THE THEATRE, YOUR CHANCE TO VOTE IN OUR 1995 READER AWARDS, AND – YES! – A NICE CHAT WITH COFFEE AD LEGEND ANTHONY HEAD. PLUS THE RETURN OF PRODUCTION HELL...

This month in Strange Tales...

FURRY!

Fantastic versions of real world wild animals abound in the computer-animated extravaganza that is *Jumanji*. Join us for a first look on **page 7**.

ROCKY!

Rocky Star, that is – yes, Australia's campest, most cut-price space cadet is coming! Join him on **page 17**.

LUVVIE!

Science fiction is alive and well – and on the stage. Join us, dahling, for a look at some alternative pantos on **page 6**.

SFX Top Tens

Stephen King's not backwards about coming forwards, especially when given a chance to recommend someone else's book. Here are ten horror novels picked, at random, from our shelves – and all of 'em have King's approval!

1 **"One hell of a horror writer."** *California Gothic* (Dennis Etchison)

2 **"[He] tells a hell of a story."** *The Don Sebastian Vampire Chronicles* (Les Daniels)

3 **"You'll be a long time forgetting this book."** *Erthmun* (TM Wright)

4 **"He is an enormously talented writer."** *Lord of Illusions* (Clive Barker)

5 **"Remarkable."** *December* (Phil Rickman)

6 **"America's *première* terror novelist..."** *The Axeman Cometh* (John Farris)

7 **"This is one of the really, really good ones."** *Fear* (L Ron Hubbard)

8 **"A devastating novel."** *Only Child* (Jack Ketchum)

9 **"If you've missed Laymon, you've missed a treat."** *Alarmus* (Richard Laymon)

10 **"[His] next book can't come soon enough."** *The Elementals* (Michael McDowell)

Caught in the

CAMERON'S SPIDER-MAN EDGES CLOSER

It's been one of the most eagerly awaited projects of the '90s, yet James Cameron's litigation-beleaguered *Spider-Man* is still little closer to filming than it was five years ago. What's gone wrong? And have the difficulties now been overcome? **Steve Holland** investigates...

James Cameron's movie version of *Spider-Man* has been wallowing in production hell for over a decade, but now things appear to be moving forward. Sort of. It's a long story...

The movie incarnation of Marvel's classic comic character, to be scripted, directed and produced by *Aliens* and *Terminator* director James Cameron – arguably the most exciting genre director of the last 20 years – took a step closer to reality recently, when 20th Century Fox confirmed they were bidding to buy the rights to certain properties from the cash-strapped Carolco Pictures. Among those projects was *Spider-Man*, leading to rampant speculation that we may – at long last – get to see the film one of these days. It's a very exciting prospect...

The Cameron film has a very tangled history, dating back to an option on the character taken out by Roger Corman in 1983. The rights lapsed in 1985, and were picked up by Cannon, owned by Menahem Golan, who subsequently sued New World Pictures (Marvel's owners, and the financial backers of the Corman project) in 1988 for "obstructing the movie." Marvel's Stan Lee was later quoted as saying that, "[Golan]'s been buying scripts, and I've been rejecting them. Finally, I said 'Look, instead of you continually getting these stories and they're no good, I'll get a writer to do the screenplay.' I wrote the story, got somebody to do the screenplay, he loved it, I love it. The only thing that bothers me is that if

Web
TO REALITY

Menahem loves it too, can it really be as good as I think it is?"

Golan subsequently sold Cannon and bought 21st Century, whose finances couldn't cope with such a big-budget movie, so the project entered limbo. It wasn't until 1990 that James Cameron was first linked to the movie, when 21st Century sold the Spidey rights to Carolco, but by 1992, 21st Century were suing Credit Lyonnais, the Dutch bank, for stopping the $2.1 million cheque paid for the project. The reason? Carolco was in financial trouble at the time, something MGM eventually bailed them out of. In 1993, Golan was back in court, this time demanding an on-screen production credit, though by the middle of the year most problems seemed to have been solved. The project appeared to be ready to go, with Carolco and 21st Century set to co-produce, and Cameron to direct. Indeed, Cameron's turned in his first script by September.

It wasn't over yet, however... In March 1995 a declaration issued by the United States Bankruptcy Court of Central California stated that a hearing was to be held on 25 May in Los Angeles. The subject? A sales motion by Credit Lyonnais Bank Nederland (CLBN) to buy the movie rights to *Spider-Man* from the bankrupt 21st Century Film Corporation for $2 million. Unless a higher bidder came along, this should have given Cameron the green light to finally go ahead. It didn't, however, because while the Carolco and 21st Century claims had by now been sorted out, Columbia and Viacom were still in litigation about distribution rights... (We hope you're following this. There'll be a test afterwards.)

Eventually, pre-preproduction was pencilled in to begin in October 1994, once Cameron had completed his chores on *Strange Days*. Again, nothing happen, and it took until October 1995 for 20th Century Fox to announce it would be working hand-in-hand with Cameron on various upcoming projects, the first being a thriller based around the sinking of the Titanic, and subsequent attempts to explore and salvage the ship. That film is now well under way, and *Spider-Man* could follow, to be shot either in Mexico or England.

So now we know *Spider-Man's* checkered history, what sort of film can we expect to see? Well, the word is that Cameron wants to concentrate on the angst-ridden side of the 17 year old Peter Parker, shortly after he first acquired his spider powers. The idea is that he'll be fitted out with a variation of the alien symbiote black costume (featured in the comics for a time) – much cooler than the normal red-and-blue affair, and dark enough to suggest the requisite teen angst.

Cameron has been quoted as saying, "It has a much stronger moral underpinning than *True Lies*. I wrote it that way. I've kind of expanded it to include the whole subject of teenage angst, and what if you were 17 and could do anything you fucking wanted anytime you wanted, and you didn't believe anything anybody said about right and wrong? What would you do? It's basically *The Last Temptation of Peter Parker*. Heavy but fun – webs, all the stuff you want to see – but underneath it has a much darker theme."

Cameron seems unimpressed with most of the superhero films he's seen so far, and seems keen to show how it should be done. Certainly, he's described *Spider-Man* as very different to, "...*Batman*, which was all dark and brooding and moody, but ultimately wasn't about anything. Sorry, I don't mean to trash another person's work. I mean, Tim Burton did what he wanted to do, which is create the ultimate mood piece. But for me it didn't really take a stand on anything. *Spider-Man* will be completely different."

Rumours from the casting couch can generally be discounted, as no-one has yet been approached for the film. Arnie as Doc Octopus is unlikely, and speculation that John Cusack will play Peter Parker remains idle supposition. Talking about idle supposition, James Cameron is also rumoured to be interested in doing a *Doctor Octopus* movie... ☞

James Cameron's Spider-Man *is one of the movies SFX is most looking forward to. Ever. Needless to say, we'll keep you posted on all future developments. Meanwhile, check out our review of the cartoon version of* Spidey *on page 72.*

> "I've expanded it to include the whole subject of teenage angst... What if you were 17 and could do anything you wanted, anytime you wanted?"
>
> James Cameron, director

Fox opens the files

FEATURE-LENGTH X-FILES VIDEOS ARE ON THEIR WAY!

You thought *The X-Files* video releases had gone on permanent hold. Not quite. Fox have ambitious plans, as **Dave Golder** reveals...

Fox have revealed full details of the episodes that have been edited together to make four feature-length *X-Files* videos for '96.

File One, as revealed last issue, is titled *The Unopened File* (£14.99, released 15 January) and features the last episode of season two and the first two episodes of season three – these last two have still not been seen in the UK on either terrestrial or satellite TV.

File Two: Tooms, is out in March, and skilfully splices together the two episodes featuring *The X-Files'* own Plasticman – "Tooms" and "Squeeze," both from season one.

May sees the release of *Abduction*, which follows the story of Scully's abduction through the episodes "Duane Barry," "Ascension" and "One Breath," all from season two. The fourth and final tape, July's "Colony," features the alien clone story and the mystery over Mulder's sister that stretched across "Colony" and "End Game" in season two.

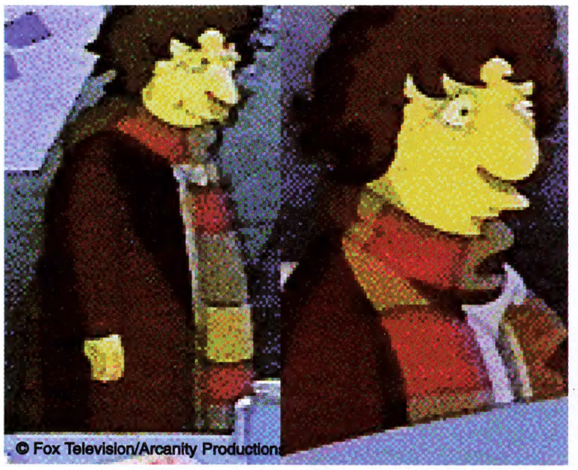
All the videos have been edited together to make "seamless" TV movies, and Fox are marketing them very much as such. They also promise that, apart from the titles and credit sequences, no material has been cut from the episodes.

Fox have plans for other special releases during the year too, including a "collectors' cube" – a case in which to store the four mini-movies – which also comes with a unique video: *The Secrets of The X-Files*, a 40-minute pseudo-documentary into the paranormal. That'll be coming out in March, price to be confirmed.

Other *X-Files* vids coming include *The X-Files Collectors' Box*, featuring Chris Carter's personal favourite episodes. Again, price and release are yet to be announced.

In addition to the videos, expect to see *X-Files* fare like *X-Files* mouse mats, mugs and T-shirts popping up in stores around the country too. ☞

Simpson who?



© Fox Television/Arcanity Productions

Fox's US TV version of *Doctor Who* might still be some way off, but it's hard to keep a good Time Lord down. Indeed, an earlier incarnation of the Doctor seems to have already made his US network TV debut, albeit in a more low key production – namely this episode of *The Simpsons*, aired at the end of November...

Oh yes it is!
(Oh no it isn't!)

With the panto season in full swing, **MJ Simpson** discovers that there's more to theatrical fantasy tales than magical pumpkin-to-coach transformations and DNA-altered beanstalks...

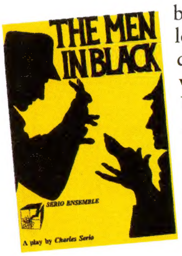
What do the following SF/fantasy tales have in common: *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, The Hobbit, The Invisible Man, Devil Girl from Mars, Illuminatus!, Interview with the Vampire,* and *Armageddon: The Musical?*

Answer: They've all been adapted for – or from – the stage.

SFX's roving reporters have visited three very different SF plays recently. Looking at them in turn gives a good idea of the range of fantastical subjects being presented on stages up and down the country.

First up, then, is *The Men in Black*, an original studio production by London theatre group Serio Ensemble. Performed in a converted loft behind the National Youth Theatre, this was a bizarre and intriguing look at the mysterious dark-suited figures who are said to visit UFO witnesses. Using a combination of acting, mime and dance, and with few props and sets, the production managed to conjure up some disturbing images.

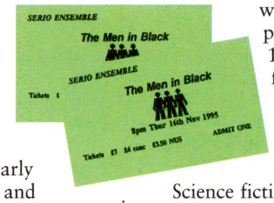
***The Men in Black*, an avant-garde fringe production, proved less can be more.**



Stephen Briggs's latest stage adaptation is of Pratchett's *Maskerade.*

The Men in Black was a fine example of how SF can overcome the apparent limitations of live theatre by applying the principle "less is more." If you can't afford complex-looking equipment, give somebody a box with a dial on it and let their acting skill and the audience's imagination make up the rest. Easy, really.

While *The Men in Black* was a somewhat *avant-garde* fringe production, *Maskerade* was an unashamedly populist piece. Adapted from the only-just-out Terry Pratchett book by Stephen Briggs, who has already adapted four *Discworld* books, it was performed by Abingdon's Studio Theatre Club in the local Unicorn Theatre – a converted medieval barn! Based as it is on *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Maskerade* proved particularly suited to stage adaptation, and was very slickly produced indeed. SFX asked Stephen how he goes about doing the job:



"Step one is to read it at least once, usually twice. Then, and without reference to the book, I write down from memory the basic plot, in a series of scenes. I sort of formulate roughly how theses scenes are going to bash together, then go back to the book, and type the play up directly from that. Afterwards, it's just a matter of remembering where I've got to skim forward or back, where I can afford to drop scenes, and where I can afford to push scenes together."

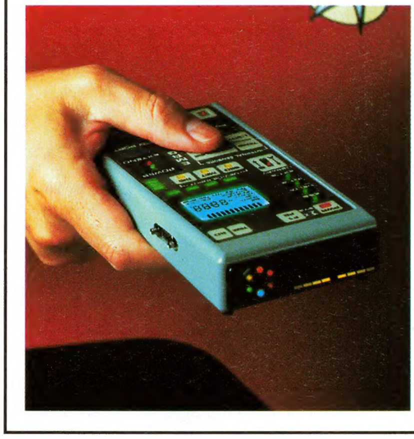
A quick vox pop of the *Maskerade* audience revealed that the most popular aspect of the production was the young man playing Greebo (when in human form) who wore a pair of very exciting thigh-boots. The least favourite aspect was the decision to stage the production in said unheated medieval barn in November!

In complete contrast to both of the above was *Nosferatu the Vampire*, a musical based on a silent movie! Based on both FW Murnau's expressionist classic and the novel which inspired it – Bram Stoker's *Dracula* – *Nosferatu* was written by Bernard J Taylor in a style like a New Wave Andrew Lloyd Webber.

After a world *première* in Peoria, USA, *Nosferatu* played one week in Eastbourne as a prelude to a UK tour in 1996. Peter Karrie, a former Phantom of the Opera, played the title role, with Christopher Biggins as Renfield.

Our conclusions? Science fiction, fantasy and horror are all alive and well on the live stage, and long may that continue. You can guarantee we'll be always there to cheer the hero and hiss the villain!

Stephen Briggs' scripts of Wyrd Sisters *and* Mort *will be published by Corgi in May, with those of* Guards! Guards! *and* Men at Arms *following in November.*



The future is here

WORKING NEXT GENERATION TRICORDERS ON SALE

As part of the Science Museum's on-going *Star Trek* Exhibition, which is running right up until 25 February, a rather special collectable has been produced – a working *Star Trek* Tricorder! Modelled on the *TNG* version (the Mark 7, if you're interested), it's actually a "fully functioning environmental sensor."

The TR-107 Tricorder, as it's been handily dubbed, can "measure atmospheric temperature changes from -50 to +50 degrees Celsius, and barometric pressure from sea level to the top of Mount Everest." It can also "sense EMF radiation from power lines, computer screens, house wiring etc.," "take precise colour readings that can be used to match paint and wallpaper, shoes and dresses etc.," "provide precise measurements of light intensity," and "act as a normal clock and timer, as well as provide elapsed time readings for sensing functions." In other words, it does everything you'd expect a Tricorder to do, and then some. Colour clash horrors can now be a thing of the past; and you need never be late again for a date, thanks to the in-built clock...

It all makes you wonder how you lived without it, really. The Tricorder, which is fully compatible with PC computers, costs £279 (plus VAT) from the museum's shop.

For enquiries or credit card orders, call ☎ (0171) 938 8196.

Animal magic

Computer animation makes its next significant step forward – it learns how to cope with hair. **Dave Golder** reports on the film that aims to out-*Jurassic* the *Park*.

J*urassic Park* showed the world what the computer animation wizards at George Lucas' Industrial Light and Magic (ILM) could do. But dinosaurs, hey, they're easy – nice shiny hides and smooth angles. Reproducing more familiar creatures – creatures with fur – now *that's* hard... Enter *Jumanji*.

Due to hit UK cinema screens on 16 February, *Jumanji* is the story of a board game which unleashes a fantasy jungle into the real world – a jungle that threatens to engulf the entire planet unless someone can finish the game. Adapted from a 1981 illustrated children's book by Randolph Caldecott Medal, it stars Robin Williams, and is aimed firmly at the kids'll-love-it-but-parents-dragged-along-can-enjoy-it-on-a-different-level-too market.

Forget the storyline, though – this is a film that'll live and die on its effects. The creatures, ranging from pelicans to giant spiders, have been realised through a blend of computer animation and animatronics. ILM, by all accounts, relished the chance to show what they could do with real life creatures. "The hair work done by ILM is really amazing," reckons executive producer Larry Franco. "The monkeys had short hair, so they were easier, but the lion had the longer mane and tail fur, and was much harder to accomplish."

Director Joe *(Rocketeer, Honey I Shrunk the Kids)* Johnston, himself an ex-ILMer and Oscar winner for effects on *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, apparently specified that all the creatures had to be *"Jumanji*-specific" – in other words, fantasy versions of the real thing rather than accurate reproductions. As animatronics designer for the film Alec Gillis explains, "We didn't just want to duplicate existing ones."

The result is a bizarre mix of the brilliant and the awful, with fabulous jungle creatures sharing screen time with some that are, quite frankly, dodgy – a real shame. It means *Jumanji* is unlikely to wow audiences in quite the same way *Jurassic Park* did. But then it does have Robin Williams, and, unlike *JP*, a plot... ◆

Jumanji will be reviewed next issue.

Jumanji – it's a jungle out there! The stampede (above and left) of computer-generated animals is one of the special effects highlights of the film. The monkeys are among the first creatures to be released by the mystical game, and cause havoc throughout the movie – ILM rose to the challenge of creating "hairy" creatures after the shiny hides of the dinosaurs in *Jurassic Park*. Other animals, however – like the lion – were created by using a mix of computer effects and animatronics.

"The hair work done by ILM is really amazing..." Larry Franco, executive producer

THIS JUST IN...

SERIAL KILLER
Although Stephen King novels are normally published in the UK by Hodder & Stoughton, his newie, *The Green Mile,* will come out through his US publisher Penguin, who have snapped up the worldwide rights. More to the point, the book will consist of six paperbacks, issued at monthly intervals, rather than the more usual single chunky hardback. Each volume will run to 96 pages and cost just £1.99. The first, intriguingly entitled *Two Dead Girls,* will hit the shelves in March.

SYMPATHY
A salutary tale from the offices of American small press horror mag *Terminal Fright*... Finding himself with a large pile of unread manuscripts, editor Kenneth Abner gave 25 to a friend to check out, along with the friend's own story, which required only slight revisions. The next thing Abner knew, his friend had become a born-again Christian, and destroyed not only his own story, but the other 25 manuscripts as well, deeming horror fiction to be a diabolical instrument of Satan! Oops...

LESSING IS MORE
Doris Lessing is still hard at work, despite SFX4's greatly exaggerated report of her death (we're sorry; we confused her with Angela Carter). Her latest project is her second opera, written – like her first – with Philip Glass. *The Marriages Between Zones Three, Four and Five* is based on one of Lessing's own novels, as was the equally snappily titled *The Making of the Representative for Planet 8.* "It's a very slow story," says Lessing, "but it has a great deal of plot!"

FAB!
The groaning bookshelves of the country's *Thunderbirds* fans, already replete with 1968 *TV21* annuals and copies of SFX2, will soon need to find room for Lord Gerry of Anderson's autobiography, due out next year from Legend. Meanwhile, Virgin has acquired the rights to Peter Mayhew's *Star Wars* memoirs ("I dressed up as a rug and went 'Wwwhhhuuurrr!!!' a lot...").

TITLE ROLLS
The competition for the longest and saddest title for a *Trek* spin-off book is hotting up. Richard Raben and Hiyaguha Cohen's *Boldly Live as You've Never Lived Before: (Unauthorised and Unexpected) Life Lessons from Star Trek* (Morrow, $14.95) is a strong contender at 15 words, but *The Star Fleet Academy Entrance Exam: Tantalizing Trivia from Classic Star Trek to Star Trek: Voyager* by Peggy Robin (Citadel, $9.95) is one word longer. On the other hand, *Boldly Live...* is undoubtedly the sadder title, and one of the authors has a funnier name, so we'll call it a draw.

The SFX Reader Awards 1995

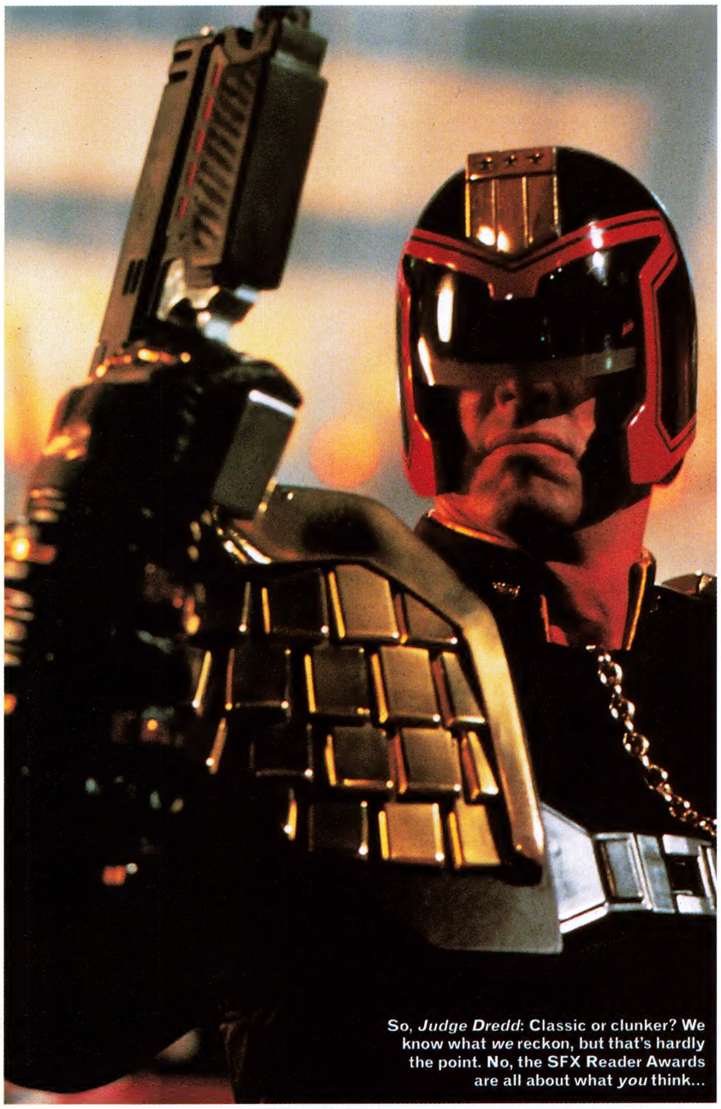
1995 draws to a close, and so does a good year for SF. But what were the highlights? And what could we have done without? Make your feelings felt in the first annual SFX Reader Awards...

Here at SFX this has been quite some year. We've seen some fine science fiction and fantasy films, a mass of TV shows from the other side of the Atlantic (and the promising sound of similar rumblings over here too), some great novels, the Scottish Worldcon, plus (and this is important to us, at least) the launch of SFX. The general public has become more aware of what SF has to offer over the last 12 months too, it seems. All in all, it's been a good year.

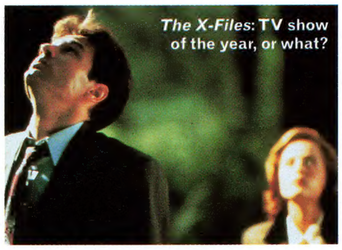
Hence these reader awards. We want to celebrate what's been best in science fiction this year, across all media. To do so, we need your help. Please take the time to fill out the form opposite (or a photocopy), and send it to us here at: **The SFX Reader Awards 1995, SFX, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon BA1 2BW.**

FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION:
A few of the best and worst from the year that was: 1995

Star Trek: Generations... Stargate... Interview with the Vampire... Everville... Sliders... Feersum Endjinn... GoldenEye... Star Trek: Voyager... Ghost in the Shell... Species... Bioforge... Hellblazer... The X-Files... Chaga... The City of Lost Children... The Multimedia Encyclopedia of Science Fiction... Seasons of Plenty... Waterworld... Apollo 13... Star Trek: Deep Space Nine... Babylon 5... Ed Wood... The Invisibles... Demon Knight... I Am Spock... Batman Forever... Command & Conquer... Judge Dredd... Tank Girl... Congo... The Prestige... Preacher... The Diamond Age... 2000AD... Mortal Kombat... Insomnia... Space Precinct... Pollen... Science Fiction: The Illustrated Encyclopedia... Space: Above and Beyond... VR.5... Earth 2... Richter 10... Lois and Clark... Maskerade... The Big Guy & Rusty the Boy Robot... Star Trek: TNG – A Final Unity... The Garden of Unearthly Delights... Casper... In the Mouth of Madness... The Outer Limits... Goddess... The Time Ships...


So, *Judge Dredd*: Classic or clunker? We know what *we* reckon, but that's hardly the point. No, the SFX Reader Awards are all about what *you* think...

Casper: Cosy kiddie caper, or crap?


The X-Files: TV show of the year, or what?

Space Precinct: Criminally overlooked, or just criminal?

HOW WILL WE VOTE?

The SFX crew reveals a handful of answers from its slightly beer-stained ballot papers...

MATT BIELBY

(*Editor and Garth Ennis fan*)
Film: **GoldenEye**
TV: **Babylon 5**
Book: **The Diamond Age**
(Neal Stephenson)

DAVID LANGFORD

(*Columnist and word fan*)
Film: The only genre movie I saw in 1995 was **Death Becomes Her**, which struck me as rather good despite its grudging critical reception.
TV: Confession time: I rarely watch TV (hearing trouble, not snobbery). But I have a sneaking fondness for re-runs of **Red Dwarf** with the volume TURNED RIGHT UP. Take that, neighbours!
Book: **The Prestige**
(Christopher Priest)

MJ SIMPSON

(*Staff writer and Frankenstein fan*)
Film: **Apollo 13**
TV: **Chiller**
Book: **Dark Terrors: The Gollancz Book of Horror** (Edited by Stephen Jones & David Sutton)

DAN GOODLEFF

(*Production editor and disco diva*)
Film: **Interview with the Vampire**
TV: **Babylon 5**
Book: **Star Fleet Academy 6** (The artwork's improved...)

DAVE GOLDER

(*Deputy editor and* Doctor Who *fan*)
Film: **Ed Wood**
TV: **Batman: The Animated Series**
Book: **The Hawk Eternal**
(David Gemmell)

CAVAN SCOTT

(*Regular reviewer and total* Star Trek, *um, fanatic*)
Film: **Star Trek: Generations**
TV: **Star Trek: Voyager**
Book: **The Art of Star Trek**

KAREN LEVELL

(*Regular reviewer and Sean Bean groupie*)
Film: **GoldenEye**
TV: **The X-Files**
Book: **Star Trek: The Next Generation, "Q-Squared"**

NICK PEERS

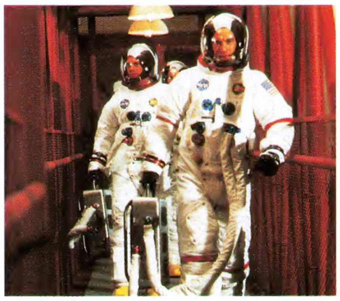
(*Reviewer and Birmingham City fan*)
Film: **Batman Forever**
TV: **Lois and Clark: The New Adventures of Superman**
Book: **Soul Music** (Terry Pratchett)

JIM SWALLOW

(*Feature writer and anime fan*)
Film: **Ghost in the Shell**
TV: **The X-Files**
Book: **Heavy Weather** (Bruce Sterling)

DAVE HUGHES

(*Feature writer and big explosions fan*)
Film: **Waterworld** (The only movie this year better than its marketing)
TV: **The X-Files**
Book: **The Panic Hand**
(Jonathan Carroll)



(From top to bottom) Lori Singer enlivened *VR.5*, but was this one of the year's critical successes, or yet another US TVSF near miss?; Michael Dorn's Worf perked up the third season of *Deep Space Nine*, but surely even he failed to add interest to the increasingly tragic-looking *Star Trek: Generations*. Or do you disagree?; *Batman Forever* – brilliant-looking rollercoaster ride of an SF action movie, or shallow rubbish?; *Apollo 13* – great science fact extravaganza, or crushingly predictable sentimental drama; and, finally, just how wet was Kevin Costner's much maligned *Waterworld*? These are your awards – and only *you* can decide the answers...

The SFX Reader Awards 1995

The closing date for voting is *31 January 1996*. Send this coupon (or a photocopy of the same) to:

The SFX Reader Awards, SFX, Future Publishing,
30 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon BA1 2BW.

FILM

1) **Best SF film of 1995**

2) **Worst SF film of 1995**

3) **Best male SF film star of 1995**

4) **Best female SF film star of 1995**

5) **Best SF film of all time**
1.
2.
3.

TV

6) **Best SF TV show of 1995**

7) **Worst SF TV show of 1995**

8) **Best individual episode from an SF TV show in 1995**
Show:
Episode:

9) **Best male SF TV actor of 1995**

10) **Best female SF TV actor of 1995**

11) **Best SF TV show of all time**
1.
2.
3.

BOOKS

12) **Best novel of 1995**

13) **Best short story of 1995**

14) **Best non-fiction book of 1995**

15) **Best SF author of 1995**

16) **Best SF novel of all time**
1.
2.
3.

COMICS

17) **Best comic book of 1995**

18) **Best individual issue of a comic book in 1995**
Comic:
Issue & story title:

19) **Best comic writer of 1995**

20) **Best comic artist of 1995**

AND THE REST...

21) **Best game/CD-ROM of 1995**

22) **Best toy/model of 1995**

23) **Most fanciable man in SF**

24) **Most fanciable woman in SF**

25) **Best villain in SF**

26) **Best spaceship in SF**

27) **Best alien in SF**

28) **Best SF event of 1995**

29) **Best SF fanzine 1995**

30) **Most over-rated thing in SF 1995**

31) **Best thing to happen in SF 1995**

32) **Worst thing to happen in SF 1995**

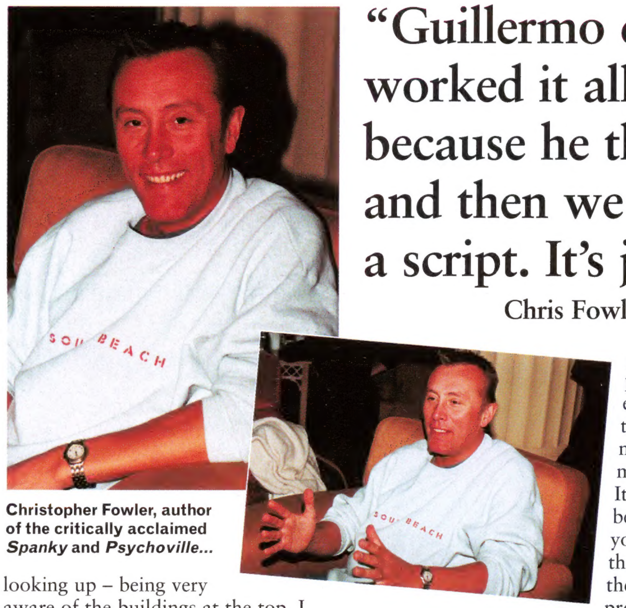
Your name:

Your address:

Hanky spanky

To many SF and horror fans, Christopher Fowler is the hot up-and-coming author of such acclaimed works as *Roofworld*, *Spanky* and *Psychoville*. But his early bibliography hides a secret, reveals **MJ Simpson**...

> "Guillermo del Toro and I worked it all out in drawings first, because he thinks so filmically, and then we sat down and shaped a script. It's just wonderful."
>
> Chris Fowler on the film version of his novel *Spanky*



Christopher Fowler, author of the critically acclaimed *Spanky* and *Psychoville*...

"I didn't have much confidence about selling anything," admits Christopher Fowler when asked about his literary origins at the UK Year of Literature Horror Festival, "so I did a really stupid book called *How to Impersonate Famous People*. It got me into all kinds of shit, because people would phone up and say, 'Come on this TV show and impersonate someone,' and, of course, I don't do that. I realised that this was a bad idea, so I switched to writing horror."

Before his first novel, *Roofworld*, Chris published *City Jitters*, an anthology which came out on the coat-tails of a certain Mr Barker.

"*The Books of Blood* were just breaking, so publishers were quite keen on more books of short stories. For a brief period they were actually looking for other anthologies that might be Barker-ish, so I got mine off the ground."

And what inspired *Roofworld*?

"*Roofworld* was an idea I'd had from always working in London, and looking up – being very aware of the buildings at the top. I thought it'd be interesting to explore society from the top of buildings.

"The problem was I couldn't get any access. Oddly enough, it wasn't until the book came out that a *Sunday Times* journalist wanted to do a piece on 'London from above' and got me into all the buildings I could really have done with getting into: Centre Point, Canary Wharf..."

As well as writing horror stories, Chris is heavily involved with the film industry. He's co-director of a company that produces "trailers, promos, poster art, everything to do with making a movie. It's great, because you get all the fun of the end product without eight years trying to get it off the ground. We did *Reservoir Dogs* for Tarantino, which had already opened and folded in the States, badly. Tarantino was really keen, and he came to see us. On the strength of that, he gave us *Pulp Fiction*, and now we're doing *Four Rooms*.

Chris's own work has also received the attention of film-makers. His first horror story, *Left Hand Drive*, was turned into a short film, shown on Channel 4 a few months ago, and his *Faust*-ian novel *Spanky* is to be filmed by Guillermo del Toro of *Cronos* fame.

"I worked with Guillermo on the script. He keeps this great big leather-bound book which is completely filled with drawings. We worked it all out in drawings first, because he thinks so filmically, and then we sat down and shaped a script. It's just wonderful."

One thing that made *Spanky* stand out on the shelves was its somewhat homoerotic cover...

"It was very much engineered by me," Fowler admits, "I had an art studio mock-up of *Spanky* and showed it to the publishers, whose jaws dropped in horror. But then one of the reps showed it to WH Smith, and they loved it – which confused the publishers, because they thought they were protecting Smith from a tidal wave of filth!"

Psychoville, and Chris's new short story collection, Flesh Wounds, are both reviewed on page 87.

Death Lee Hush

CHRISTOPHER LEE TO PLAY DEATH!

He's been Dracula, Frankenstein's monster, the mummy and Rasputin, but now Christopher Lee faces the biggest challenge of his career. SFX can exclusively reveal that the *horrormeister* himself will be providing the voice of Death in the Cosgrove Hall animated version of Terry Pratchett's *Discworld*.

The 13-part series will also feature Neil Morrissey – from *Men Behaving Badly* – as Mort, and is scheduled for broadcast around December 1996. Most of animation will be done in the traditional style, but establishing shots of Great A'Tuin, the giant turtle on which Discworld rests, will be generated in 3D using computers.

If you want to see a few brief extracts from *Discworld,* you should check out the 20 Years of Cosgrove Hall exhibition which is currently running at the National Film Theatre on the South Bank in London. It runs up until 3 February, after which it transfers to the Granada Studios Tour in Manchester.

A limited number of *Dangermouse & Friends* T-shirts have been produced to celebrate the exhibition, and SFX has 20 to give away in a special Strange Tales one-off compo. To win one, just tell us who supplied the voice of Penfold in *Dangermouse.* Mark your entry the "Ooh, lumme, DM!" Compo and send it to: SFX, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon BA1 2BW, to get here by 1 February. Winners will be notified in SFX10. Good luck!

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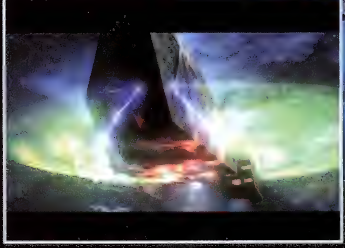

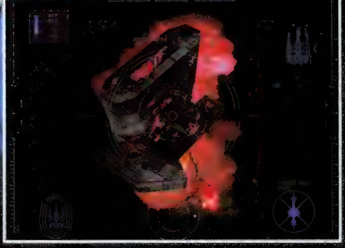

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THIS JUST IN...

HALF A DENT

For many *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* fans, Simon Jones *is* Arthur Dent. He played him on radio, on record, and on TV, but since the much-mooted film version is still nowhere in sight, he's now a little old to play the character on the big screen. However, last April, Douglas Adams revealed *his* choice for the role, should the movie ever get made. Hugh Laurie, says Adams "has the same air of very, very, very precisely articulated complete bewilderment."

DOTTER JEKYLL V SENOR HYDE

Spanish writer-director Gonzalo Suarez is currently finishing off production of *Mi Nombre Es Sombra,* which is yet another adaptation of Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde.* Meanwhile a forthcoming bio-pic of Stevenson will centre around his love affair with Fanny Osbourne. *Bloody Jack and Tiger Lilly* will shoot next year in the UK, Europe, USA and assorted Pacific islands.

WEIRD KID

Watch out for a movie called *Powder*, in which a young boy is locked up for a lengthy period of time and develops telekinetic powers (and a grey skin). Sean Patrick Flannery *(The Young Indiana Jones Chronicles)* plays the title role, with support from Mary Steenburgen, Lance Henrikson and the ever-reliable Jeff Goldblum, with Victor Salva in the director's chair. Buena Vista will be handling the UK release, although no date has yet been set.

STORM WARNING

Bloopers ahoy! Contrary to what we reported in last issue's Storm Constantine interview (page 16), the introduction to *Stalking Tender Prey* is *not* by singer Carl McCoy. It is, in fact, by author and psychic researcher Andrew Collins. Carl McCoy, former lead singer with Fields of the Nephilim, worked with Storm on her earlier novel, *Hermetech.*

Rollin back the fears

Sexy vampires, crazy costumes and surrealistic sorties... It's all in a day's work for *avant-garde* French vampire film-maker Jean Rollin. As his latest bloodsucker movie, *Little Orphan Vampires,* earns a UK release, **Andy Black** enters his twilight world...

Since the volatile days of his first genre film, *Le Viol du Vampire* ("The Rape of the Vampire"), the enigmatic Jean Rollin has remained an endearingly idiosyncratic film-maker. Movies like *La Vampire Nue* ("The Nude Vampire"), *Levre de Sang* ("Lips of Blood") and *Requiem pour un Vampire* are colourful, ethereal, and quite unlike typical vampire films.

"I've tried to create an atmosphere of dream, poetry and madness," says Rollin , who cites as influences the likes of French poet Corbierre, artists Druillet and Trouille, and the poetry of George Franju's film, *Eyes Without a Face.*

Rollin's career has ranged from *Le Raisins de la Mort* ("The Grapes of Death"), a film influenced by *Night of the Living Dead,* to *La Morte Vivante* ("The Living Dead Girl"), which revolves around a young woman who returns from the dead, and devours her best friend – "The massacre is a kind of love scene," Rollin claims.

However, it's his flamboyant love affair with vampires that has become Rollin's trademark, and it's the genre he's returned to with *Little Orphan Vampires,* launched on the English-speaking public this month, first in novel form (published by Redemption Books), and then as a film. It features a pair of blind vamps, Louise (Alexandra Pic) and Henriette (Isabelle Teboul) – an amoral pair who stalk the streets of Paris. Rollin thinks it's his best film to date.

"For the first time I had enough time and money to work with the actors before shooting," he explains, "and it was a lot easier because the script was based on my own book."

Whatever you think of his unconventional approach, Jean Rollin is a hugely talented film-maker. As he himself would have it: "There are many beautiful images hidden inside the head of each human being. The idea is to take them out and show them to people!"

Little Orphan Vampires should get a limited art house release in January or February '96.

Rollin's female vamps in *Little Orphan Vampires.*

Female vampires abound in much of Jean Rollin's distinctive work, including this early one, *Requiem pour un Vampire.*

> "There are many beautiful images hidden inside the head of each human being..."
>
> Jean Rollin, director

PRODUCTION HELL

(New SF and fantasy film projects from across the planet)

Edited by **Steve Holland**

Welcome to the mad world of Production Hell, the place where Hollywood shows its SF/horror wares. Naturally, though, what you see is not always what you get: Many of the films listed here will go through radical changes before hitting the big screen.

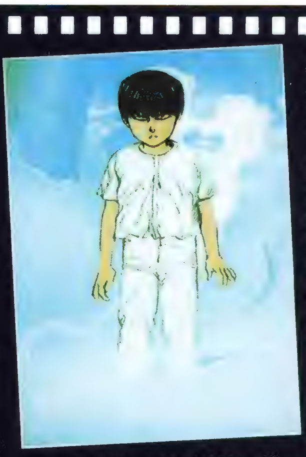
http://www.futurenet.co.uk

Key: Dir – Director; Scr – Scriptwriter; ExPrd – Executive Producer; Prd – Producer; St – Starring.

- **AKIRA** (Orion) Universal were said to be close to signing the dotted line for a big-budget live action version of Katsuhiro Otomo's manga in mid-1993, and the latest snippet has Ed Pressman involved as producer.

- **AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN PARIS** (J & M Entertainment/TriStar) Julie Delpy is in talks to star in the sequel to *...in London.* The film, helmed by Anthony Waller, is due to begin shooting in April 1996 in Paris and Luxembourg.

- **APEX** (Green Communications) Dir Philip Roth. Prd Talaat Captan. St Richard Keats, Lisa Russell. A parallel world of war and destruction is created when a time traveller changes history.



The distinctive look of *Akira* will be hard to reproduce in live-action.

- **BATMAN TRIUMPHANT** (Warner) Julia Roberts is now front-runner to play Poison Ivy. Roberts is already signed up to co-star in *In Love and War,* a Hollywoodised romance between Ernest Hemingway and his nurse (Reality check: Nothing happened; Hollywood: Julia gets it on with Chris O'Donnell). The idea that she could go from loving him to poisoning him is sweet music to copywriters everywhere. But remember, folks, you read it here first. And Patrick Stewart is denying any links between himself and Mr Freeze, claiming that the first he knew about it was reading it in *Variety.* He's committed to three films next year already, which will put him out of the running anyway.

- **BULLETPROOF** (Davis Entertainment) An amnesiac goes on the run from hitmen hired by a pharmaceutical company afraid that he will remember the fact that they've been infecting people with an alien virus.

- **CARVER'S GATE** (GEL Productions) Prd Phil Jackson, Dan D'or. St Michael Pare. Good

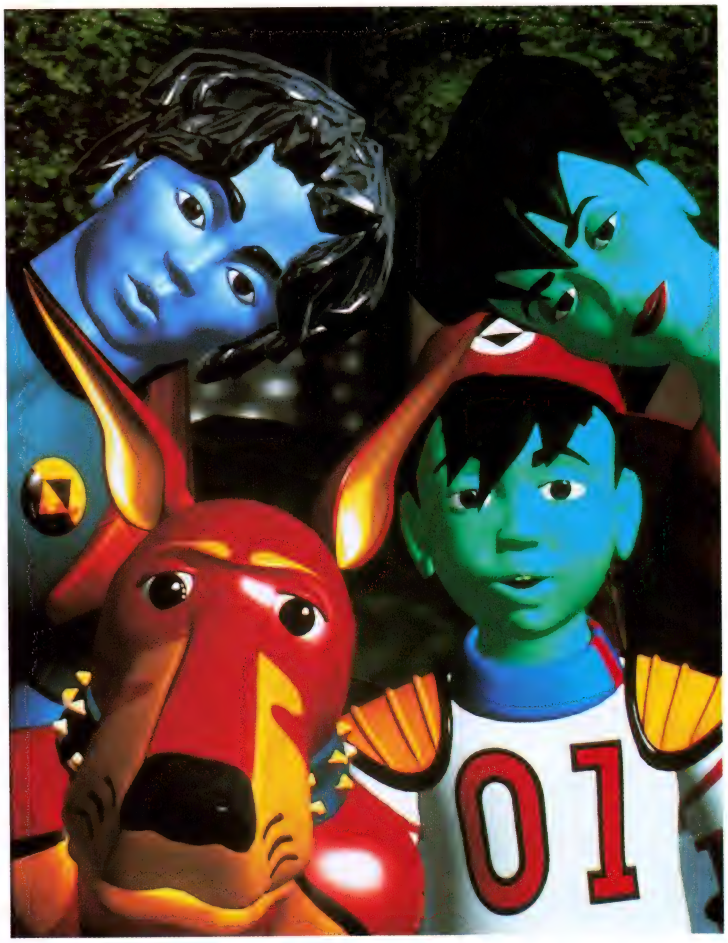
Log on! Reboot is back!

A new series of *Reboot*, the innovative computer-generated cartoon series, begins on Thursday, 4 January at 4.40pm on ITV.

Its children's TV slot means the show is surprisingly little-known in the UK – "Bizarre, given that it's produced by a bunch of crazed Brits, and is a monster success!" as Brendan McCarthy, well-known comics artist and *Reboot* character designer, notes – but that's something we expect to change very soon.

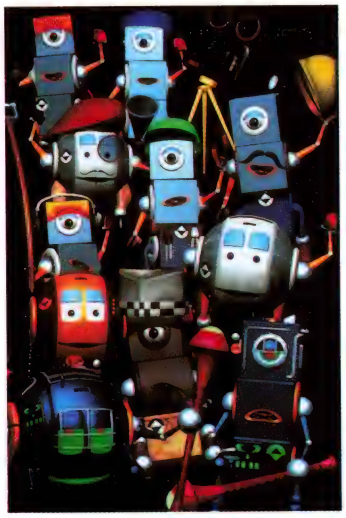
After all, it shares a look and feel with the big movie success of the moment, *Toy Story*, and is currently the top Saturday morning show on ABC in the States. Better yet, an *X-Files/Reboot* crossover, featuring the cast of both shows, has just been completed, and a "stunning follow-up to *Reboot* for prime time" is also in the works.

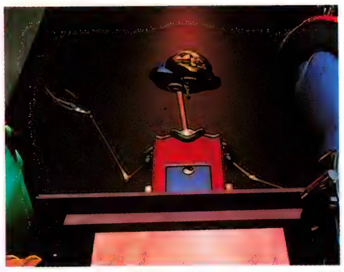
For those who don't know the show, it follows the adventures of Bob, Dot and Enzo, inhabitants of the computer city of Mainframe, as they battle against the evil virus Megabyte. The shows are half an hour long, and there are 13 of them... Look, just set the video,okay?



***Reboot* features beautifully computer-generated animation, and a cast of highly distinctive characters, largely designed by British comic artist Brendan McCarthy. Five new characters will appear in the second year, to join our heroes, including Enzo (in the "07" shirt); his dog, Frisket; Enzo's older sister, Dot (main picture, top right); and her almost-boyfriend Bob.**

Dot Matrix (above) runs Dot's Diner, a popular '50s-style hang out in the city of Mainframe. The majority of the population consist of sprites – "tiny bundles of electrical impulses who go to work when a computer is turned on and booted up" – like the group below. Phong (below left) is the oldest sprite in Mainframe, and has a few secrets of his own...





guys versus bad guys 100 years from now.

● **CENTURION FORCE** (Amazing) Dir Troy Cook. Prd Faruque Ahmed. St John Savage, Jennifer Barker. A corrupt leader turns against his people and poisons the water in this futuristic thriller.

● **CLIVE BARKER'S ECTOSPHERE** (Spelling Films) *Horrormeister* Barker will produce this tale of a young man who can travel to a secret dimension. Almost certainly a reworking of his *Ectokid* comic, which briefly appeared from Marvel Comics in 1993-94.

● **CONTACT** (Warner) Prd Linda Obst, Doug Mitchell. At one time it was thought Jodie Foster had lost contact with the movie, but she's now apparently committed to starring in this adaptation of Carl Sagan's novel about first contact between humans and extraterrestrials. However, original director George *(Mad Max)* Miller has exited over the usual creative differences; a new director has yet to be announced, although the film is still expected to go into production early next year.

● **CROSSWORLDS** (Trimark) Dir Krishna Rao. Prd Lloyd Segan, Stephen Hopkins. St Rutger Hauer, Josh Charles, Stuart Wilson. From the producers of *Blown Away*, a new SF thriller about the place where all dimensions meet, and the battle between a man and woman with an evil from a parallel world.

Sylvester McCoy will definitely appear in the new *Who* TV movie.

● **CYBERJACK** (Everest) Dir Robert Lee. Prd John A Curtis. High-tech thieves are after the ultimate computer virus, and an ex-cop is all that stands between them and the chance to hold the world to ransom.

● **CYBERTECH PD** (Promark Entertainment) St Lorenzo Lamas, Chris Sarandon. Set in a future where virtual reality and drugs are the norm. Hmm, it could be Colchester.

● **CYBER VENGEANCE** (Amsell Entertainment) Dir Chris Ingvordsen. Prd Sultan Films. St Robert Davi, Mathias Hues. Solid B-grade line-up for a solid B-grade plot in which a prison guard battles a corrupt warden to prevent him from using prisoners in a deadly virtual reality game.

● **DARK PLANET** (EGM Film International) Prd John Eyres, Paul Eyres. In the distant future, two expeditions race to conquer undiscovered space.

Objets d'arse

Star Trek PC Control Centre

What is it?
A fully-working keyboard, a plastic monitor mask, a disc holder in the shape of a shuttle-craft, a "phaser" mouse and a Star Fleet insignia mouse mat, all designed to give your PC that authentic *Next Gen* feel.

Why is it cool?
Er, because just about anything that can brighten up a boring old PC has got to be good? Because, although the *Blue Peter* team could no doubt match the effect with a few odds and sods, it wouldn't be quite the same? Okay, you got us...

Why is it sad?
Because it is – just look at it. And since when was the Enterprise decorated in blue and red? And the keyboard's one step up from a ZX Spectrum – sponginess incarnate. Nah, if you want a *Star Trek* PC, you're still probably best off just buying the *Trek* game *A Final Unity* to play on it instead...

Verdict
Dreadful. It would be funny if it weren't for the fact the set-up altogether costs over £130!

Dave Golder

Keyboard £79.99, mouse and pad £29.99, disk holder £10.99, Monitor Mask and Mouse Pad £16.99. Available by mail order from D&O Communications ☎ (0171) 352 6416.

R is for RADIO

When you're a big fan of Ray Bradbury and you work for BBC Radio, the natural outcome can only be *Tales of the Bizarre,* a series of playlets based on Bradbury short stories. Hamish Wilson is that SF fan. **MJ Simpson** tracked him down...

"I've been a fan of Ray Bradbury since I was a boy," explains radio producer Hamish Wilson. "My mother enrolled me in a library, and after three months I had read all their SF, including the three Bradbury books they had. I think I've now read everything he's done at least twice."

After a stint in commercial radio, Wilson joined BBC Scotland in 1989, just as they were taking delivery of a synclavier, a piece of radio equipment about which he enthuses at length.

"It's the best radio machine in the world. It can edit to 1/100,000th of a second. You can't do that with tape, because the piece you cut out would be narrower than the razor blade you were cutting it with! I thought this would be perfect for producing radio SF, so I contacted London, offering to do a radio version of *Kaleidoscope.*"

Kaleidoscope is a stage play – written by Bradbury – which deals with a group of astronauts as they drift apart following the accidental destruction of their spaceship. The play was recorded and first broadcast about five years ago – around the same time Hamish produced a radio version of Walter M Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz* – and is due to be repeated in January as part of Radio 4's "Space Season." Wilson is particularly proud of the fact that he was able to aurally represent the spaceship exploding...

"We needed the sound of the spaceship breaking up, but space is a vacuum so sound won't travel. But what we *could* create was an impression of the tremendous amount of RF radiation – radio frequencies – which the explosion would generate, and which the astronauts would hear in their suits."

Following the success of this play, Wilson turned his attention to the idea of a series based on some of Bradbury's many short stories. The first writer he approached was Brian Sibley, whose credits include the radio version of *Lord of the Rings,* and who has been a friend of Bradbury's for 20 years.

After Sibley had picked the three stories he wanted to adapt, the other three were chosen by another respected writer, Catherine Czerkawska. Some of the stories were produced by Wilson in Edinburgh; others by Martin Jenkins in London. The really big coup, however, was getting Ray Bradbury himself to introduce each episode.

Wilson admits to being a big SF fan, and finds radio the ideal medium.

"I read Isaac Asimov, Fred Pohl, Harry Harrison... My bookshelves are groaning! Hard SF like, say, James White's *Hospital Station,* doesn't lend itself to radio, but people like Bradbury or Wyndham are ideal, because they deal directly with the imagination – which is exactly what radio does."

Tales of the Bizarre *is broadcast on Radio 4 at 11pm on Thursdays until 11 January. For more SF radio, turn to page 46.*

Bizarre fruit

The six stories which make up Ray Bradbury's Tales of the Bizarre *are, in order:*

Night Call Collect
Barton (Kerry Shale) is a telephone engineer on Mars who is left behind when the planet is evacuated.

Have I Got a Chocolate Bar for You?
TP McKenna stars as a priest taking confessional from a young man whose sin is that he's a chocaholic.

The Jar
Charlie (Roger May) constantly visits a local carnival to stare at a mysterious jar, which he eventually buys. But what exactly is in it?

The Fruit at the Bottom of the Bowl
This study in obsession centres on murderer Acton (Nigel Anthony) who carefully wipes away every fingerprint he has left – anywhere.

I Sing the Body Electric
After his wife dies, a father of three prepares to send his children to stay with their aunt, but because they hate her so much he buys them an android grandmother instead. Joanna Tope stars as Granny.

Skeleton
A man troubled with his bones goes to see a specialist, played by Liam Brennan. There's a gruesome twist to this story that we would be churlish to reveal.

- **DARKLAND** (Everest) Dir Robert Lee. Prd John A Curtis. A psychiatrist and his wife race against time to save the world from a deadly computer game.
- **DAYBREAK 2250AD** Andre Norton's novel has been optioned by Timepiece Films.
- **DIGITAL MAN** (Green Communications) Dir Philip Roth. Prd Talaat Captan. St Ken Olandt, Adam Baldwin. The digital man of the title is a computer-generated soldier – the ultimate weapon.
- **DOCTOR WHO** A hitch has delayed the production of the new *Who* telefilm, which will now go into production next February, rather than November. Universal and Fox are demanding a minimum 17% share when the show debuts in its Thursday "movie night" slot – an extraordinarily high rating for any show, let alone a cult SF show.
- **DRIVE** (Overseas Film Group) Dir Steve Wang. Mark *(Crying Freeman)* Dacascos (currently appearing in *The Island of Dr Moreau* as a failed experiment) is a techno-enhanced fugitive on the run from a corporate hitman who offers a stranger five million dollars to drive him to LA.
- **FORTRESS 2** Scr Geoffrey Wright. Christopher Lambert will return to the role of Brennick, who was banged up originally for having a second son – an offence in the USA's overpopulated future. Now he has to escape space prison to save his boy.
- **GENES** (Propaganda Films) Michael Crichton-esque high-tech drama set in the world of genetics. Will probably go into production in 1996.
- **HIM** (Turner Pictures) Another recently greenlighted pic from Turner has a woman scientist in a race against time to cure an alien bacteria that could wipe out the whole of the male species. Scripted and directed by Caroline Thompson.
- **IRONCLAD** (Overseas Film Group) Dir/Scr Frank Cappello. In a futuristic, desolate world, where wars are fought by gigantic battle tanks, a father and son face a treacherous alien to protect a vital secret from destruction.
- **JACK FROST** (Prism Pictures) Dir/Scr Michael Cooney. Prd Jeremy Paige, Vicki Slotnick. A serial killer emerges as a mutated creature after a collision with a DNA experiment and terrorises a town preparing for its annual Snowman Festival. Currently in pre-production.
- **THE JETSONS** (Turner Pictures) A live action version of the Hanna-Barbera SF cartoon took a step closer to reality on Turner's October-announced slate for 1996. Aiming for a '97 release, Chuck Russell will direct from a script by *Ed Wood* duo Scott Alexander and Larry Karaszewski. Turner are obviously keen on HB: They're also behind *Johnny Quest* and a live action *Scooby Doo.*
- **A KID IN THE ARABIAN NIGHTS** (Trimark) A follow-up to *A Kid in King Arthur's Court*

Talking Head

Anthony Head, star of stage, screen, and Gold Blend ads, is currently starring in virtual reality series *VR.5*. Inevitably, **MJ Simpson** felt it his duty to pop round the flat to borrow a jar of instant...

Those of you currently enjoying *VR.5* on Sky may have been surprised to find one of the main characters killed off just three episodes into the first series. But I'm willing to bet you were even more surprised when you saw who replaced him – Lori Singer's original mentor, the Professor, was out, and in came the much more mysterious and Machiavellian Oliver Sampson, played by popular British actor, Anthony Head, known up and down the country as "that bloke from the Gold Blend ads."

It's a good, juicy part, but when Head auditioned for the role, he was as much in the dark about the character as anyone...

"They told me very little about the role," he explains. "Then, on my second reading, they started to explain roughly what it was all about. He's a bit of a Svengali figure, is Sampson. You can't work out whether he's taking care of Sydney Bloom (Singer), or usurping her. Initially, he gives very little away, and it's exasperating because of that, but in time you start to discover why he's such a strange chap, and what dark secrets are locked in his past."

Conceived as a mid-season replacement show, *VR.5* ran for a mere ten episodes in the States, although a further three were made so that the series could be sold into syndication and to foreign markets.

"We had some extremely good viewing figures," sighs Head, "but they were very up and down. So while the overall numbers weren't stunning, the response we got was brilliant – it's developed an enormous cult audience. In America, people have even gone to Canada to get copies of the shows that didn't get shown on Fox! In fact, there are still discussions about its future; it's by no means dead."

Of course, to many people Anthony Head is still "Mr Gold Blend" – or "Mr Taster's Choice" in the States, where the campaign is being remade for American audiences.

"It's been very good to me," he smiles, when I ask him about the coffee ads. "Why should I deny it? It was just like doing quite a good little mini-series every six months for 40 seconds. The bottom line is that Gold Blend is something I'm proud of – it opened up a market in America for me, so I was able to go over there, and it made me box office over here for theatre."

Ah, theatre. Among Anthony's many theatrical roles is one that will be very familiar to most SFX readers – that of Frank N Furter in *The Rocky Horror Show*. Like most people who have donned the trademark stockings and suspenders, Head had a whale of a time with the part...

"Wonderful!" he enthuses. "I did it four or five years ago, and they've asked me a few times if I'd do it again, but I didn't because it always meant touring. This time they said, 'Do you want to do just six weeks in the West End?' and I said 'Yes!' It's wonderfully wicked and very dark, and a great part to play. Where else do you get such a vibe off the audience?"

Indeed. The other notable genre entry in Head's CV is an episode of *Highlander – The Series,* in which he played, of all things, a suitably accented American ambassador...

"My character's son had raped a local girl, whose father just happened to be an Immortal. And so the guy laid siege to my chateau, and old Highlander turned up and helped me out. It was a good little episode." ◆

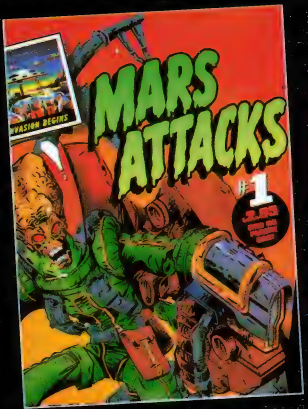
British audiences can see Anthony in the new BBC series The Ghostbusters of East Finchley *(in which he plays an East End wide-boy who "sells cars to Ray Winston in Spain," according to Head). VR.5 is now showing on Sky One, every Saturday, at 8pm.*

(about a little league player ends up in the court of Arthur via a time warp) will start shooting in Morocco in January, from a script by Michael Part, who wrote the earlier film.

● **THE KILLER TONGUE** (Factory Pictures/Lola Films/Iberoamericana) Dir/Scr Alberto Sciamma, Jason Piette. ExPrd Michael Cowan, Jason Piette. Prd Christopher Figg, Andres Vincent Gomez, Volkert Struycken. St Robert Englund, Doug Bradley, Alaska Gara, Mindy Clarke, Jason Derr. This $3 million gory British/Spanish SF/horror/comedy began rolling in Almeria and Madrid, Spain on 19 September for nine weeks, thanks to financial backing from Spanish producer Andres Vincente Gomez.

● **THE KING OF THE ELVES** Jim Hensen Productions have taken an option on Philip K Dick's short story; Dick seems to be the current flavour of the month, with "Minority Report" and "Imposter" already being optioned by 20th Century Fox (for *Total Recall 2*, qv) and Miramax (for their *Light Years* anthology) respectively.

● **LETHAL COMBAT** (Cinequanon Pictures) Prd Maurice Smith. In pre-production. Gamblers in a post-apocalyptic future risk their lives in a virtual reality maze.



Tim Burton's *Mars Attacks!* now doesn't look set to be out until '97.

● **LORD PROTECTOR** (Alpine Pictures). Dir/ExPrd Ryan J Carroll. Scr Ryan J Carroll, Stacy Upton, Bruce Young. Prd Roland Carroll. $15 million SF movie currently shooting in Los Angeles.

● **THE LOVE BUG** is going to be dusted off for a telemovie by ABC/Disney.

● **MARS ATTACKS!** (Warner) Was to have begun shooting in LA and Washington on 14 August, but logistical problems have pushed the start date back to next year. A Christmas '96 or Summer '97 release is now expected for Tim Burton's version of the '60s trading cards.

● **MICHAEL** (Turner Pictures) Originally announced over a year ago, Turner have now greenlighted Nora Ephron's fantasy comedy starring John Travolta as a beer swilling, fag-toking angel. Ephron will direct from a script co-written with Delia Ephron and Pete Dexter. Shooting will start in February.

● **NEANDERTHAL** (DreamWorks) DreamWorks SKG picked up the rights to John

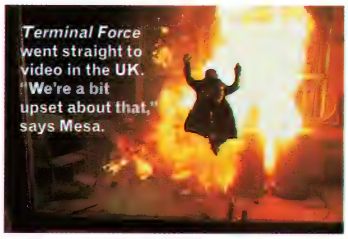
Force of one

Having worked as visual effects director on *Darkman, Army of Darkness, Under Siege* and *The Fugitive,* William Mesa has now moved into directing. His first film is SF action flick *Terminal Force,* but there's plenty more where that came from, as he explains to **MJ Simpson**...

Starring Brigitte Nielsen, Richard Moll, and the UK's own action star, Craig Fairbrass, *Terminal Force* is a cheerful bit of SF hokum which has it all: Cyborgs, aliens, crystals, spaceships, big fights with big guns, the full monty.

"Inner Light Pictures is a new company," explains director William Mesa. "And just looking at how the market plays, we knew we had to deliver something that was going to be above and beyond what people can normally see in this genre, and in this price range of films. I have my own visual effects company, so we designed a project that we knew would be very ambitious."

William Mesa directs the formidable Brigitte Nielsen in his action-orientated SF fantasy *Terminal Force.*



Terminal Force went straight to video in the UK. "We're a bit upset about that," says Mesa.

> "We designed a project that we knew would be ambitious..."
>
> William Mesa, director

Apart from a one-off 35mm screening at Worldcon in August, *Terminal Force* has gone straight to video in the UK, which has naturally come as a disappointment to Mesa.

"Unfortunately, we sold the movie when it was still in development to a company that hasn't got the ability to release it theatrically, and we couldn't take the film away from them. It's a shame, because New Line Cinema wanted to take the film on and do a partial theatrical release. We were a bit upset about that, because we knew that it would have done okay. It's done well in Japan, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Korea. Brigitte's very popular in the Orient."

Wasn't it scary directing what amounts to a lady Schwarzenegger?

"We had all these giants walking around – Brigitte is big, Richard Moll is six foot nine, and Craig Fairbrass is about six foot four. He's also the star of *Terminal Force 2,* which we'll be shooting next Summer."

Craig Fairbrass, of *London's Burning* and *Proteus,* co-stars with Nielsen.

Other projects in the pipeline for Mesa include *DNA,* starring Mark Dacoscos and Jurgen Prochnow...

"They've recreated this ancient creature which was once capable of curing diseases," he explains, "but actually it was a fierce predator. We're using a combination of a prosthetic creature and 3D animation. Filming starts in February.

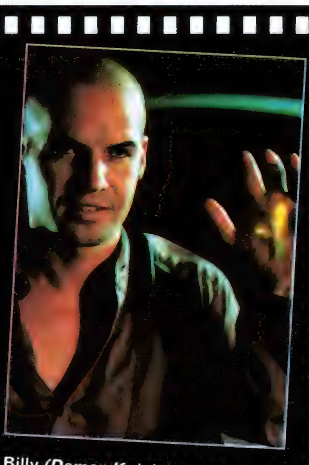
"Then there's *Trouble in the Family Tree,* a movie about an American guy who inherits a castle in England, and hires a detective to help him find out what has happened to the property – because everybody who owned it has been killed! The writer, Nick Davis, wrote *Terminal Force,* and comes from the Cotswolds. We plan to shoot *Trouble* in the Robin Hood Bay area at the end of '96."

Terminal Force *is available to rent from 10 January, and is reviewed on page 77.*

Darnton's as-yet-unfinished novel about two scientists who journey to Russia to find a lost tribe for $1 million. One trade paper opined that the story would be perfect directorial material for Spielberg, one of DreamWorks' three founders, although his workload – overseeing a projected nine movies a year for DreamWorks, plus already contracted work outside, which includes sequels to *Jurassic Park, The Flintstones* and *Casper* – may dissuade him.

● **OBLIVION 2** (Full Moon) Dir Stuart Gordon. Prd Charles Band. St Julie Newmar. As if the original *Oblivion* wasn't enough. More cowboys and aliens from Band. Gordon is probably best known for the bleak Christopher Lambert starrer, *Fortress.*

● **THE OSIRIS CHRONICLES** (CBS) Joe *(Gremlins, Inner Space)* Dante will direct and executively produce this pilot movie for the CBS sci-fi series written by novelist Caleb Carr. The basic plot has a sinister threat faced by a group of people who have to restore galactic order. The show began shooting on 20 November, with a March debut lined up. Meanwhile, Carr's detective thriller, *The Alienist,* is also being brought to the screen; Paul Verhoeven was an early runner for the directorial seat, but those duties have now been passed to Phil Kaufman, who helmed the 1978 remake of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and *Rising Sun.*



Billy *(Demon Knight)* Zane is lined up to star in the epic *The Phantom.*

● **PETTICOAT PLANET** (Full Moon) Dir Ellen Cabot. Prd Dave Decoteau. St Betsy Lynn George, Elizabeth Kaitan. From the Charles Band stable, a spaceman lands in a Wild West setting inhabited by loads of gorgeous women.

● **THE PHANTOM** (Robert Evans Co./Village Roadshow Pictures) The line-up for the $35 million production has now settled down to include Billy Zane, Kristy Swanson, Catherine Zeta Jones, Treat Williams, Patrick McGoohan, Jon Tenney, James Remar and Samantha Eggar. But no Cameron Diaz.

● **PINOCCHIO: CHILD OF THE FUTURE** (Santa Monica Pictures) Prd David Rose, Ami Artzi. The current Savoy-Kushner-Locke live action version of Carlo Collodi's famous story is now in production. The twist in this tale? The Pinocchio of the future is a computer-generated "living" boy!

● **PRIMEVALS** (Full Moon) Dir David Allen. Prd Charles Band.

The secret history of Rocky Star

From left to right: Soap actor Christopher Morsley *is* Rocky Star; *Shallow Grave* star Kerry Fox *is* Diana Moore; and (yes!) co-creator and co-producer Stephen Fearnley *is* Mitch Morgan.

It's shot on Super 8, its stars mime to a crackly old record, and there are no sets and the minimum of props. **Andrew Sholl** reports on *Rocky Star,* the nutty new SF comedy.

The gang's all here, ready to face off against interstellar villains Cos and Zog.

Welcome to the witty world of *Rocky Star,* TV's campest, cheapest space cadet, where macho heroes swap suggestive glances, and evil villains dance the two-step and sing novelty songs.

This award-winning Australian series began life as a popular radio drama for children in 1953. 40 years later, a trio of art school graduates from Sydney, calling themselves Mucci, Yucci and Stucci, stumbled across the master recordings, and hit on the idea of shooting footage to accompany the soundtrack, and employing actors to lip-synch to the dialogue. With careful editing, and a heavy dollop of '90s irony, producers Stephen Harrop, Stephen Fearnley and Andrew Traucki have turned a seminally dopey story into a clever, knowing weekly serial consisting of 20 five-minute episodes.

Like Tom Corbett: Space Cadet and Jet Jackson before him, Rocky (played by Australian soap opera regular Christopher Morsley) and his cohorts are called upon to battle an evil alien mastermind intent on kidnapping and enslaving mankind.

"The original *Rocky Star* was really all about Reds under the bed, and it's incredibly sexist. So we de-machoed Rocky, and made the token woman a more modern girl," laughs co-creator Fearnley, who also doubles as the slow-witted side-kick, Mitch.

Technical and budgetary limitations proved to be a blessing in disguise, however. The trio used Super 8 film, back-projection, close-ups and clever lighting to conjure up a remarkably effective futuristic feel.

The series *premièred* to great acclaim in Australia in 1993, and has now been picked up by the BBC. *Rocky Star* was awarded the prize for best use of sound at the Chicago Film Festival, and narrowly missed nabbing the title of best television drama.

Stephen Fearnley promises that there are more adventures in store – Mucci and co. are hard at work on a big screen version – and with Kerry (*Shallow Grave)* Fox keen to reprise her role as scientist Diana Moore, finance needn't be a problem either.

"She told us that on no condition is anyone else to take Diana Moore's role," says Fearnley, "because she had such a good time doing it. But then, so did the rest of us!"

> "The original *Rocky Star* was really all about Reds under the bed, and it's incredibly sexist. So we de-machoed Rocky, and made the token woman a more modern girl."
>
> Stephen Fearnley, co-creator

St Juliet Mills, Richard Joseph Paul. An anthropologist and a few of his students fall through a crack in the Himalayas and discover an alien lifeform.

● **PRINCE VALIANT** (Bernd Eichinger/ Hearst Entertainment) Dir Anthony Hickox. Scr Hickox, Carsten Lorenz. Prd Carsten Lorenz. Based on the classic comic strip by Hal Foster. A Neue Constantin film, currently in pre-production. A script by M Beckner, Roger Kumble, and Marlene King has already fallen by the wayside.

● **REPLIGATOR** (Reel Movies) Dir Bret McCormick. St TJ Myers, Toni Power. A scientist has to repair the deadly damage his experiments cause.

● **ROBO WARRIORS** (Republic Pictures) A young boy reanimates a robot in order to save the world.

● **SEMI-AUTOMATIC** (Conquistador Entertainment) Prd Avi Nesher, Pascal Borno. St Xavier Declie. Declie is a French model "discovered" in a Caribbean resort. The film faces off a genetically altered man and his creator in the 21st century.

● **THE SILENCERS** (PM Entertainment) Dir Richard Pepin. St Jack Scalia, Dennis Christopher. Thriller in which a special agent investigates a group who threaten witnesses to UFO sightings. Not inspired by any popular X-titled TV shows, of course.

● **THE SKY IS FALLING** Archaeologists discover evidence that God exists, and are hunted by hitmen hired by religious leaders. David Fincher directs, having turned his career around after the *Alien*^{3} backlash with the critical and financial hit *Seven.* It seems Fincher will then go on to direct a Stephen King adaptation, *Insomnia,* and may be involved with a James Cameron thriller entitled *The Crowded Room.*

● **SLEEPSTALKER 2** (Prism Pictures) Dir Turi Meyer. Scr Al Septien, Turi Meyer. Prd Luigi Cingolaini. The Sandman's back to pursue a childhood enemy and confront the military. Currently in pre-production.

● **SPACE MARINES** (Green Communications) Dir John Weidner. Prd Talaat Captan. St Billy Wirth, Meg Foster. A high-tech crew have to recapture a deadly nuclear cargo.

● **SPEED RACER** (Warner) Surely more names have been attached to this film than any other? The latest to become unattached is director Julian Temple. Producers Joel Silver, Richard Donner and Lauren Shuler-Donner are now in talks with Gus *(My Own Private Idaho, To Die For)* Van Sant.

● **STAR QUEST** (Forefront) Dir Philip Cook. Prd John Ellis. St Tracy Davis, Hans Bachmann. A super-being and a space-jockey have to save the world from corporate greed.

● **THINNER** (Spelling Films) Dir Tom Holland. Scr Michael McDowell. ExPrd Steve Kesten. Prd Richard Rubinstein, Mitchell

Sweet revenge

It's always hard predicting what's going to be a hit. Clive Barker's *Nightbreed,* for instance, bombed. His short story, *Candyman,* however, spawned a successful movie, the sequel to which is currently on release. **Ed Martinez** met Bill Condon, director of *Candyman 2...*

"This film is about the birthplace of Candyman, and how it claimed him again," Bill Condon is explaining. The one-time writer of *Strange Invaders* and *F/X 2*, and director of *Sister Sister* and *Dead in the Water,* is new to the *Candyman* franchise, but from the way he talks, it's clear he knows what makes it tick...

Condon worked on the script for the sequel himself, along with writers Mark Kruger and Rand Ravitc. Their storyline is inspired by (rather than directly based on) the Clive Barker short story that sired the first film...

"I got involved in *Candyman 2* because I'm a big fan of the original," Condon admits. "I loved the way Bernard Rose, the director, said, 'What does a haunted house look like today?' To answer his own question, he picked those tenements in Chicago's Cabrini Green, which are really scary places."

Candyman 2 was shot after an extremely short pre-production period – only nine weeks – in Los Angeles and New Orleans.

"Easily the most challenging aspect was working with live bees on location," Condon laughs. "There were only a few stingers on the first film, so even Virginia Madsen, who's allergic to bees, felt comfortable doing it. Not that she came back to do part two! Unfortunately, however, there were plenty of stingers in our movie, and it was never pleasant – especially for Tony Todd, who plays the Candyman, and Billy Washington, the stunt co-ordinator who doubled for Tony. It was funny because Billy, this incredibly macho guy, once did a 10,000 foot falling stunt that didn't phase him at all – but he couldn't take being stung by a swarm of bees!"

Perhaps the most interesting thing about *Candyman* – what raises it above the normal supernatural horror flick – is the strong racial aspect to the story. The Candyman himself starts life, over 100 years ago, as one Daniel Robeitaille, a well-educated black American who went to school in Europe. Unfortunately, the good folk of New Orleans feel he's trying to rise above his station, and so decide to teach him a lesson...

New Orleans provides a distinctive, atmospheric backdrop to *Candyman 2.*

> "So many terrible things were done to Candyman, it's hard not to feel sorry for him."
>
> Bill Condon, director

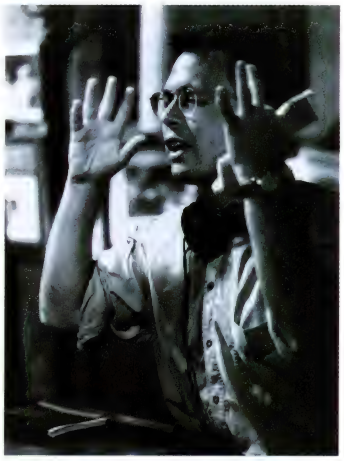
"*Candyman 2* goes deeper into the racial dynamics of the story," emphasises Condon. "So many terrible things were done to him, it's hard not to feel sorry for him."

And yet some have still accused the film of racism, it seems.

"I know!" he says, with disbelief. "A few critics in America displayed amazing cynicism, I thought, suggesting that the bit at the end of the movie, when we find out that the Candyman has been a victim himself, was just tagged on in order to justify the fact that we've had this big, scary black man running around. They completely missed the relationship between Caroline and her young, black student, which clearly illustrated a kind of healing process. The student saves her, and finally comes to see that he identified not with Candyman the killer, but Candyman the victim, all along."

Candyman 2 *is now on general release.*

"Mirror, mirror on the wall..." As fans of the first film will know, this girl is being *very* unwise...



Bill Condon enters the big time with *C2*.

Galin. St Joe Mantegna, Robert Joe *(Dust Devil)* Burke, Lucinda Jenny, Kari Wuhrer, Michael Constantine. $15.6 million adaptation of Stephen King's horror novel about a defence attorney lawyer who starts losing weight after a gypsy puts a curse on him. Began shooting in August in Camden, Maine, for release in 1996.

● **TIME TRACERS** (Reel Movies) Dir Bret McCormick. St Jeffrey Combs, TJ Myers. Time travel yarn, currently in the pre-production stage.

● **TIMELOCK** (EGM Film International) Prd John Eyres, Paul Eyres. In 2050, a space shuttle mission attempts to unlock a deadly force.

● **TIMEMASTER** (SGE Entertainment) Dir James Glickenhaus. St Pat Morita, Joanna Pacula. An orphan travels time and space to find his parents.

● **TOTAL RECALL 2: MINORITY REPORT** (Carolco) Prd Mario Kassar, Paul Rassam. A script exists based on a Philip K Dick story (as with the first *Total Recall*), with Jan de Bont the first choice of director after he's finished *Speed 2.* The head of the financially rocky Carolco, Mario Kassar (who pocketed a $1 million as producer of *Stargate*) is rumoured to be in negotiation with both 20th Century Fox and MCA about selling some or all of the titles on his slate, including *Spider-Man* (see lead story on page 4) and a sequel to *Basic Instinct.* Whichever way you look at it, *Total Recall 2* takes a step closer to reality. The Carolco shake-up could also free the way for *Terminator 3.*

*Alien*³ director David Fincher is all set to direct *The Sky Is Falling.*

● **UTELAND** (Angel Films) Dir Donvon Esstman. Prd J. Chow. St Wilhelm Von Herrmann, Stephanie Le Gee. A scientist creates a time machine to track down his missing wife, but ends up involved in an alien war.

● **THE WARRIORS OF VIRTUE** (Kathy Morgan) Dir Ronnie Yu. A teenager in Los Angeles battles an evil warlord from another dimension.

● **THE WHOLE WIDE WORLD** Based on the relationship between Robert E Howard (Vincent D'Onofrio), the creator of *Conan the Barbarian,* and Novalyne Price Ellis (Renee Zellweger). Howard was a weak youth who got into body-building, and became a model for his own heroes. He shot himself when his mother entered a terminal coma.

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Scene by Scene

Leonard Nimoy

Once upon a time, a man put on a pair of pointed ears and became a legend. As Mr Spock in Star Trek, Vulcan first officer of the starship Enterprise, Leonard Nimoy became a figure of both controversy (was he the devil?) and lust. He also became one of the most recognisable faces on the planet. For much of the '70s, however, the actor seemed determined to distance himself from the character. But now, with his new autobiography, I Am Spock (sequel to 1975's I Am Not Spock), man and Vulcan appear reconciled, as **Jonathan Norton** discovers...

© Craig Stennett

Great missed photo opportunities of our time: Leonard Nimoy is standing in the middle of a near-deserted Royal Albert Hall, freshly kitted out with polystyrene rocks and neon spaceships. There's about to be a rave night – or, rather, "a dance event for young people," as the Hall's beaming, bouncing PR woman is eager to point out. "A rave?", enquires Nimoy, uncannily raising one eyebrow. But then the sound system kicks in, there's a bass boom measurable on the Richter scale, and Nimoy raises both eyebrows – and flees in the direction of the Hall's oddly Enterprise-like curved perimeter corridors. So we'll get no pictures of Spock climbing the rocks of an alien planet, then. Shame.

The man who may (or may not) be Spock is casing the joint. He'll be the star attraction at a major *Star Trek* convention to be held at the Royal Albert Hall next year, and he's never been here before. He seems impressed, though, and the PR woman looks delighted that she'll be hosting another *Star Trek* convention soon. "The last one was so amazing," she trills. "People came from all over Europe. It really took us by surprise."

"Surprised that *Star Trek* is popular?", asks a somewhat perplexed Nimoy, fixing her with a Francis Urquhart stare. "Why surprised?" You half expect him to add in all seriousness, "That is not logical."

If this man ever truly doubted that he was Spock – and his new autobiography, *I Am Spock,* would seem to suggest that his hatred of the role was blown out of all proportion in the '70s – he certainly doesn't seem to mind playing up to the image these days.

Still, it's been a long day, and it follows hard on the heels of a long week. Nimoy is looking tired. He croaks his way through our chat as valiantly as he can, but you can't help wondering how his rasping came across in the radio interview he did minutes before. That, apparently, took place in a tiny office just off the warehouse part of the Brent Cross branch of WH Smith. Prior to that there'd been a book-signing at the shop, after which he'd been bundled into a Rolls Royce and whisked off for further interrogation at The Royal Albert Hall. No wonder he looks shagged out. The things a well-known figure has to do when he's got an autobiography to flog, eh?

So where does SFX fit into all this? Ah, well, we were in the Rolls with him, you see. No second wasted on this particular PR tour of duty...

I Am Spock is, rather curiously, the sequel to *I Am Not Spock,* which came out in 1975. That book was, Nimoy argues, "hugely misunderstood – I wasn't trying to turn my back on Spock. The title

Spock's Finest Hours

There are plenty of great Spock moments in classic Trek – some of them as simple as the quizzical raising of an eyebrow, others complex rituals, like the recurring Spock-McCoy banter. Join us for quick trawl through the best (and worst) episodes in the life of everyone's favourite Vulcan, as compiled by **Adrian EC Petford.**

Best Spock episode: "Amok Time"
This is a real gem, providing a deep and fascinating insight into the complexities of the Vulcan culture for the first time in the series. The script, by "proper" SF writer Theodore Sturgeon, showcases Leonard Nimoy's acting talents to the full; it's deeply unnerving to see Spock reduced at various times to distress, anger and, ultimately, violence. It's also welcome to see a polystyrene planet and alien culture (ludicrous jingle bells excepted) that seems vaguely plausible; the standing set on Vulcan is particularly good, and helps lessen the studio look of the production considerably.

Worst Spock episode: There can be only one: "Spock's Brain"
The eponymous grey matter may have solved the unsolvable in countless previous episodes, but here it plays an even more important role. The Enterprise has been invaded by beautiful female aliens (again) – who are after our hero's bean counter! Highlights include: Spock talking McCoy through the operation to put his brain back in, then waggling his limbs to check it's all connected properly; the remote-control Spock (every home should have one); and the fact that Spock is able to undergo a brain operation while still keeping a full head of hair (what's more, it's not a bit out of place afterwards).

Best Spock breakdown scene: "The Naked Time"
A good performance from Nimoy makes the audience really feel for his *alter ego's* personal torment. This classic episode contains many memorable moments, but Spock's emotional outpouring under the influence of the madness-inducing illness is one of the highlights, showing us a brief glimpse into the extreme emotions of the ancient, undisciplined Vulcans.

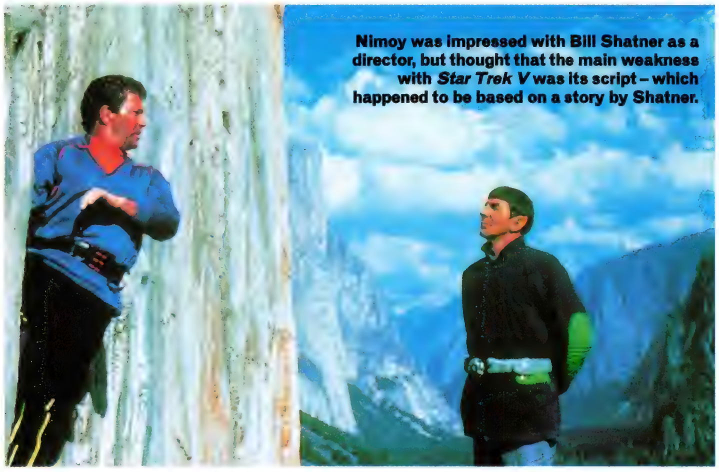
Most illogical thing Spock ever did (not under alien influence): Doing a jam session with the space hippies in "The Way to Eden"
After this torturous sight, the fact that Vulcans never let their hair down becomes all the more understandable. However did he stop himself from laughing when confronted with a girl "playing" a bicycle wheel? The second most illogical thing Spock did? Sign the contract for the third season after reading the script for "Spock's Brain..."

Best Spock put-down line: Spock's comment on the "alternative" crew in "Mirror, Mirror"
"May I point out that I had an opportunity to observe your counterparts here quite closely. They were brutal, savage, unprincipled, treacherous. In every way, splendid examples of *homo sapiens,* the very flower of humanity." Another good one is Spock's retort to McCoy's crack about his green blood in "The Naked Time" – "As for my anatomy being different from yours, I am delighted."

Worst Spock make-up job: "The Cage"
As with all good things, *Star Trek* took a while to get everything quite right. Like the clockwork Enterprise, Spock only seemed half-finished in the pilot episode – the legendary ears jut out too far, and are too obviously stuck on. The skin-tone is all wrong too. Spock's eyebrows are also too bushy, giving the Vulcan an overly demonic appearance. Maybe replacing Number One as second in command in the series proper prompted Spock to seek a make-over...

Most accomplished feat of Spock acting: Keeping a straight face during Kirk's infamous 'horse impersonation' spectacle in "Plato's Stepchildren"
You won't find better at your local panto, yet Spock somehow manages to retain his tortured, sombre expression throughout. He must have been thinking of the pay cheque – or was just glad he didn't have to do it himself. ("I am a serious actor." But, Mr Nimoy, remember that scene in...)

Best line uttered about a part of Spock's anatomy: From, you guessed it, "Spock's Brain"
Despite the countless derisory references to the Ears of the Year and the fake green blood, there's only one quote that can fit the bill here: "Jim, where are you going to look? In this whole galaxy, where are you going to look for Spock's brain?" Thank you, Doctor McCoy. 25 years on, and it sounds as idiotic as ever.



Nimoy was impressed with Bill Shatner as a director, but thought that the main weakness with *Star Trek V* was its script – which happened to be based on a story by Shatner.

was tongue in cheek, but most people never read beyond the title, and just made assumptions."

So, praying for bad traffic, and warily expecting the Royal Albert Hall to loom up at any moment, SFX decides to find out what the man has to say for himself...

So, are you Spock or aren't you Spock?

"I am. I am. The title of the book is accurate..."

Do you chat with Spock in your head, like you say you do in your book?

"I do. Indeed I do."

When was the last time you had a chat with him then? What did he say?

"This morning. I'm not allowed to reveal what he said, actually. He asked me to stop doing that. He started getting upset about me quoting him for the world to read. He said, 'We can carry on having these conversations, but please don't write about them any more.' So I said, 'Okay.'"

So when we print that it'll be Spock's last ever published pearls of wisdom?

"Ha, ha. An exclusive. No, probably not. I *am* doing a lot of interviews..."

Don't you get worried that a psychiatrist might start analysing the "conversations" in the book? Wouldn't he'd find them a bit, um, strange?

"It helped me to come to terms with him, this book. Let me put it this way: I toured the States with a play called *Vincent* – a one-man show about Vincent Van Gogh. I took it out on various tours, of a number of lengths. Over three years I played over 35 cities – about 150 performances.

"After we'd played each city, we would pack the whole show up in 18 large crates, and take it all to the next town. We had just a small company – maybe five or six people and myself – and each time we finished a tour the crates would come back to Los Angeles and go into storage.

"Then, every few months, I would hear a voice say to me, 'There's a living thing inside those crates, and you've got it crated up in a warehouse and it can't breath.' And I would call whoever it was I had to call and I'd say, 'Let's take *Vincent* out on a tour again.'

"Then came a time when I made a deal with one of the American networks to videotape the show, and the strange thing is that once we had it videotaped, I no longer heard that voice calling me. He was now on a tape, you see, and anyone who wanted to see him could pick up that tape and put it in their VCR and play it. So that particular call went away.

"In a certain way, I feel we've done the same thing with Spock. That it's okay – we've had our day with it. He's had his, and I've had mine. It'll be okay if we don't bring him out of the box."

So did the first book dent his ego? Is this one way of saying you're sorry?

"In a way. Well, no. Because, as I explain in this book, the first book was misinterpreted. It was never about denying Spock. He was, is, and always will be, an important part of my life. But a lot has happened to Spock since 1975, and I have had to re-evaluate my relationship with him."

But it did seem for a while there – when you declined the opportunity to appear in the proposed *Star Trek: Phase II* TV series, and then, allegedly, asked for Spock to be killed off in *Star Trek II* – that you didn't actually like playing the character at all...

"I did *not*, in fact, asked to be killed off in *Star Trek II.* I was asked how I felt about it happening, and, in the end, I asked for the script to be altered, because Spock's original death scene didn't seem heroic enough to me. It happened too soon in the script, and didn't have a point. We did a lot of work on the script, getting his death scene right. You've also got to remember that a lot of people were convinced that *Star Trek II* was going to be the last of the movies at the time."

What period of Spock are you happiest with?

"I guess we hit our stride in the middle of the first season of the original TV show, and through the second season. The third season was very weak in general, but it was especially not good for Spock. And he was at his best in the third and fourth movies too."

Those are the two films you directed...

"I'm sure that had some bearing on it."

The Spock that came back in Star *Trek IV* was notably different...

"Yes, in *Star Trek IV* he was more distant. He was searching for himself, and that's what gave him back this sense that he was different. But by the end of the movie, when he told his father, 'Tell mother I feel fine,' he knew where he was; he knew where he was going."

It all sounds like you don't expect to appear as Spock again?

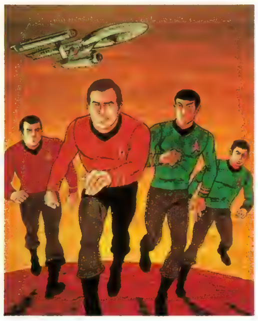
"No. The last time we saw him he was doing this embassy work in the Romulan Empire in *The Next Generation,* and obviously it would be nice to know that he had accomplished something worthwhile there, but I don't think we'll ever see it played out. I doubt I'll ever play Spock again."

Why not?

"I demand too large a fee these days, ha, ha, ha! No, it has to do with what I was saying about the character in a box, that sense of closure."

How much of your life is taken up by *Trek* these days?

"A lot. At times, anyway. In the last 30 years there have been periods where Spock and *Star Trek* were dominant, and other times when they were in the background, but they've always been there."



"The first book was misinterpreted. It was never about denying Spock. He was, is, and always will be, an important part of my life. But a lot has happened since 1975, and I have had to re-evaluate my relationship with him..."

Is there anything you wouldn't do in the name of fandom?

"A lot. It's a question of what's appropriate. I have been asked many times to appear as Spock outside *Star Trek*, and that's something I have carefully avoided. I think Spock exists within the context of the films or shows, and only works within that context. He's not something you can play around with, and put up on a horse in a parade or something. I tried it once – very early on – and I said I would never do it again. It was undignified."

Did it worry you that people were coming to see things like *Vincent* and thinking, "That's Spock playing Van Gogh," rather than Leonard Nimoy?

"No. Never. There was one instant in the '70s, when I was playing the role of Caligula in Texas, and early on in the show I had a line of dialogue where I was required to say, 'We are resolved to be logical.' Well, that was a dangerous moment. And if I heard a laugh, I just had to ignore it. But other than a couple of moments like that, I have never had a problem."

So what have been your favourite non-Spock roles?

"I really enjoyed *The Man with the Glass Booth*, in which I played a man accused of being a Nazi war criminal – I did that at the old Globe Theatre in San Diego, back in the early '70s. And being in *A Woman Called Golda*, opposite Ingrid Bergman, was a great thrill. That was her last role. Working opposite Henry Fonda was wonderful. The TV movie we did together *[The Alpha Caper – Ed.]* wasn't very good, however."

Does it ever worry you that in 200 years' time, people will remember you as Spock, and not for any of those other, perhaps more "worthy," roles?

"No, not at all. Just to be remembered is enough. I wouldn't mind it."

What do you hope they remember about Spock?

"That he was interesting. Intriguing. Worthwhile. Different. Refreshing. Handsome. Ha, ha!"

You laugh, but you did end up as the sex symbol in the show, rather than Captain Kirk, which is surely what must have been originally intended...

"That was bizarre and surprising – to me, at least."

The Rolls stops at some traffic lights for a few moments, and I try to work out how near we are to our destination. I can't see anything, but the Royal Albert Hall is now showing up on signposts, worse luck. Nimoy catches sight of a poster advertising a re-run of Space: 1999 *on Bravo.*

"*Space: 1999*. Was that successful?"

It has its fans...

"Marty Landau and his wife, Barbara – they were then married – came over here to do that after they left *Mission Impossible*, and at around the same time I went in to do *Mission Impossible* for three years. I'd known them both for a number of years before, though, because when we were making *Star Trek* they were shooting *Mission Impossible* next door."

Presumably, it's a lot harder going into an established series as a regular character than being there from the beginning?

"Of course. I was doing the same job Marty had done, after all, but with a superficially different character. The guy I was given to play, Paris, wasn't much of a role, really. For most episodes you'd only see him for a moment, usually in the opening sequence, when the mission was assigned, but then he would disappeared into other characters *[He was meant to be a master of disguise, so 'Paris' was often played by other actors! – Ed].*"

Have you seen much of *Babylon 5* yet?

"I don't know very much about it. My son, Adam, just directed one, and he's been asked to do some more. He says he enjoyed it."

Speaking of Adam, you appeared in an episode of the new *Outer Limits* show, which he directed. How did that come about?

"We sort of came to the idea together. We did the episode *I, Robot* *[Nimoy also appeared in the same story in the original series – Ed]* after

Classic Spock

Over the years, Spock has become one of the most quotable characters in SF. Here's SFX's top ten Spockisms, compiled by **Adrian EC Petford...**

1. **"He simply could not believe his ears."** (Responding to an incredulous reaction from Kirk in "The Trouble with Tribbles.")

2. **"Emotions are alien to me. I'm a scientist."** (Comment to Leila in "This Side of Paradise.")

3. **"Don't grieve, Admiral. It was logical. The needs of the many outweigh...** [the needs of the few] **...' Or the one."** (Spock's death scene in *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan.)*

4. **"I have noted that the healthy release of emotion is frequently very unhealthy for those closest to you."** (Shortly after Kirk's 'horse impersonation' turn in "Plato's Stepchildren.")

5. **"Humans smile with so little provocation."** (Comment to his mother in "Journey to Babel.")

6. **"It strips our minds from us, brings a madness which rips away our veneer of civilisation."** (Spock on the overwhelming Vulcan mating urge in "Amok Time.")

7. **"Jim, when I feel friendship for you, I'm ashamed."** (Spock under the influence of the intoxicant in "The Naked Time.")

8. **"It means to adopt a philosophy, a way of life, which is logical and beneficial. We cannot disregard that philosophy merely for personal gain, no matter how important that gain might be."** (Spock on why his duty as a Vulcan must come before saving his father's life in "Journey to Babel.")

9. **"Terror must be maintained or the Empire is doomed. That's the logic of history."** (The alternative Spock in "Mirror, Mirror.")

10. **"You haven't the right to be vulnerable in the eyes of the crew."** (Spock reminding Kirk of his responsibilities in "The Enemy Within.")

Behind the ears

WHAT'S LEONARD NIMOY REALLY LIKE?

WE'VE TALKED ABOUT SPOCK A GREAT DEAL, BUT THERE MUST BE MORE TO LEONARD NIMOY THAN TREK? WHAT BOOKS DOES HE READ? WHAT FILMS DOES HE LIKE? WHAT DOES HE EAT FOR BREAKFAST? TIME FOR A QUICK-FIRE QUESTION ROUND...

What was the last film you saw?

"Woody Allen's *The Mighty Aphrodite.* Very funny. I'm actually in it – very prominently, in fact. I never even had to show up for the filming, and I didn't even know I was in it until I saw it. I'll leave what I mean as a surprise..."

What's your favourite kind of food?

"I enjoy lots of different kinds. I like deli, Mexican, Chinese, sushi – a wide range of tastes, though mainly fish and poultry. I used to cook vast breakfasts, but *(patting stomach)* not any more."

What's the worst decision you've ever made?

"Maybe having this conversation. No, erm, I've made some bad ones, but I don't think I have any regrets. I understand that I have made some mistakes – some people might say calling the first book *I Am Not Spock* was one – and some bad decisions, but I don't have any complaints."

You don't regret not producing *The Next Generation,* then?

"No. They asked me to, and I said no. I was editing *Star Trek IV* when I got the call, and I said I would give it some thought, but by the time I walked out of the office I knew what my answer was going to be. I went straight on to direct *Three Men and a Baby,* which I had a great time doing. Then I made a film called *The Good Mother,* which I am very glad I made. Would I have rather been making *The Next Generation?* No."

Would you have done it differently?

"It's something I have never even thought about."

Who would you like to play you in a film version of your life?

"Ha, ha, ha! It's not going to happen."

Tim Burton – buffoon or genius?

"I worked with him once. I thought he was very clever, though I didn't get to know him very well. It was on a *Fairytale Theatre* episode – 'Aladdin.' I played the evil Uncle. We had fun. He's very, um, theatrical. I appreciate that."

Who would you give an unsung hero award to?

"Bill Shatner and I agree that one of the greatest unsung heroes of *Star Trek* is Gene Coon, who came to us at the end of the first season, I think, and produced most, if not all, of the second season, after Gene Roddenberry had gone. And he gave us the Klingon Empire, and some wonderful episodes and characters. And all without much fanfare. He just ground away, sitting at his desk, 12-15 hours a day."

Have you got any idea what's going on at the end of *2001?*

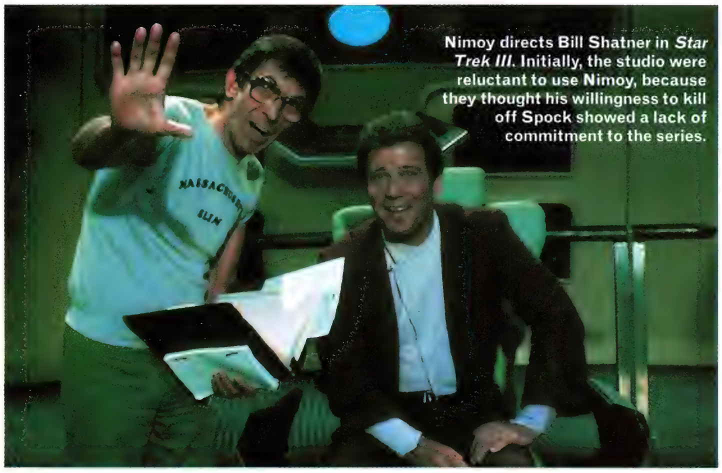
"Sure. I detested *2001.* But I understand what's going on just as well as I understand the communication between the probe and the whale in *Star Trek IV.*"

Can you remember all of the Magnificent Seven?

"No. Well, there's Steve McQueen, Horst Buchholz, Jim Coburn, Charles Bronson... Am I right so far?"

What question would you never answer?

"Who would I want to play me?"



Nimoy directs Bill Shatner in *Star Trek III*. Initially, the studio were reluctant to use Nimoy, because they thought his willingness to kill off Spock showed a lack of commitment to the series.

he took the idea that we should do it together to the producers, and they bought it. We had a great time. Adam is developing a career quickly now."

At one point you were the executive producer for a new SF series in the States yourself, called *Deadly Games*. Can you tell us about that?

"I was only executive producer temporarily. We've done 13 episodes now, but I don't think we're going to do any more."

That's bad news. We'd heard good things about it...

"I think it was fun, and we were getting better at it. Sometimes, it takes time to find the heart of a show. But we were with the new Paramount network, and they don't seem to be in a position to get behind shows and wait for them to develop. They either crash in big, or they're taken off."

Even *Star Trek: Voyager's* been having problems...

"I believe it was one of the few shows that managed to get renewed."

What do you make of the way it's treating Vulcans?

"I've seen the one guy, Tuvok. I don't know... It doesn't make a lot of sense having a black Vulcan, but that's beside the point. The important question is, what is he given to play? So far I haven't seen much that's other than a certain speaking style that sounds something like Spock."

Do you have any plans to direct again?

"There's a new play I'm hoping to do. It's a comedy drama about a mother-daughter relationship. When we've got the cast, we'll do it."

If nothing else, you must be thankful to Spock for helping you make the leap to directing movies.

"Certainly, but I felt I was up to the job. My main worry was how the other members of the cast would react, but I needn't have bothered."

It seemed all the regular *Trek* characters got more to do in your films...

"Yes, the *Mission Impossible* theory, as I put it – every character has their role to fulfil in the story."

Although George Takei still says he missed out on his key scene in *Star Trek IV*...

"Ha, ha! George has spent a lot of time and energy letting everybody know that he was robbed of that scene. He was supposed to meet a small child in present day Chicago, and the child turns out to be his ancestor. Unfortunately, the child just wouldn't act on the day. I did feel sorry for George, but it couldn't be helped."

It comes across in *I Am Spock* that you get on well with Nick Meyer, who co-wrote *Star Trek IV*, and directed *Treks II* and *VI*.

"Yes and no. Nick is a very interesting, creative, energetic guy, and a hard worker. We got along pretty well during the making of *Star Trek II*, which he directed. He did a very successful rewrite of the script, and he gave us some wonderful material for *Star Trek IV*. And he developed some good ideas for *Star Trek VI*, on which I was executive producer, and where I personally requested him as director.

"We did finally come to a difference of opinion over the final script, however. I wasn't totally satisfied with it – I thought we'd missed something. The picture certainly stood on its own merits, but I felt there was another element that could have been added, and he and I didn't see eye to eye about it. It was the part where McCoy and Kirk are taken inside the Klingon Empire, on the pretext that they have been charged with murder. It was played strictly for adventure, which was fine, but I said, 'Let's reveal something about the Klingons we never knew before.' We could have come up with some amazing secret – something that was a real 'Wow!', and that the audiences would have talked about afterwards – 'Did you see that secret Klingon chamber?' or whatever. But Nick just couldn't get his mind around that."

It sounds like he's perhaps a good director, but not completely *au fait* with *Star Trek* mythology...

"I guess something like that was going on. But some aspects of *Star Trek* he captured wonderfully. He just couldn't get into that mystery – the mystical, cultural side of things."

And then, there it is. The Royal Albert Hall. The Rolls slides into place next to one of the doors around the back, and the PR bod from the book company leaps out of the car, shouting she'll be back in a minute, and could I please wrap up the interview. So, time for the big question.

One last thing about the book: It's relatively free of Shatner bashing.

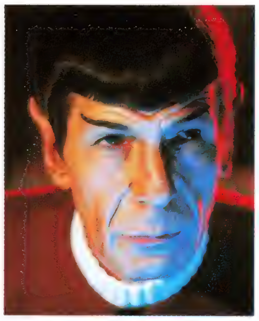
"Shatner bashing?"

You know, the kind of juicy backstabbing that the press likes to blow up out of all proportion...

"All I can say to that is yes, Bill and I have had our differences. But I also owe him a great deal. I could not have developed Spock the way I have without his unique portrayal of Kirk. This book is about my relationship with Spock, and so I only really deal with Bill in relation to that."

Live long and prosper, Leonard Nimoy!

Leonard Nimoy will appear at Generations II at The Royal Albert Hall between 6-8 April. All his portrayals of Spock, from the classic Star Trek *series (currently showing on BBC 2) to the six movies to his appearance in the* Star Trek: The Next Generation *episodes "Unification," parts 1 and 2, are on video to buy or rent.* I Am Spock *is now on sale (Century, £16.99).*



"I have been asked many times to appear as Spock outside *Star Trek*, and that's something I have carefully avoided. I think Spock exists within the context of the films or shows, and only works within that context."

Neutral Zone

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LETTER EACH MONTH WILL WIN AN EXCLUSIVE SFX T-SHIRT.

Killer llamas, Welch's assets & missing titles

"BLATANTLY OBVIOUS TITLES"

Dear SFX,
In your articles you often refer to particular episodes of *The X-Files, Babylon 5,* etc. by name, but I am unable to find these titles. Am I missing something blatantly obvious? Or do you have to have ESP or alien DNA to find them? If you say Carter wrote "Tooms" and "Beyond the Sea," I don't know which episodes you're talking about. Please could you describe the episode or provide a key.

Sally Bowles
Tring

Chris Carter, for reasons best known to himself, prefers to not have on-screen episode titles in The X-Files, *but they are always listed in* Radio Times. *Virtually every SF or horror magazine, or fanzine, on the planet has published at least one* X-Files *episode guide (except SFX, where we don't indulge in such things) at some time or other too. If you're still having trouble, try out the newly published* Official Guide to the X-Files *(which we're reviewing next issue).*

However, every other SFTV series we can think of – including B5 – carries on-screen titles. Watch for them just after the opening credits.

"OUTRAGED"

T-SHIRT WINNER!

Dear SFX,
I was outraged by the number of pictures of Raquel Welch that you felt obliged to print in what can only be described as a tenuous link to the Ray Harryhausen article and the video release of *One Million Years BC* in SFX6. After scanning your magazine thoroughly and photostatically enlarging and mounting on laminated cardboard all the images of Ms Welch, I counted no less than *ten* pictures.

I also noticed that in your competition you were not giving away any promotional posters of the film since these were doubtless already covering the bedroom walls and ceilings of the SFX editorial team. I am thoroughly outraged and would cancel my subscription if I had one.

Yours disgustinglyed,

J Stokes
Brighton

PS. Can I have a poster of Raquel to contribute to my thesis on "Science Fiction as a Medium for Pornography and Male Inadequacy"?

Believe us, you don't want to know what's on our bedroom walls. Have a T-shirt instead.

"EL TERROR LLAMA"

Dear SFX,
I knew the Spanish name of *Gojira (Japon Bajo El Terror Del Monstruo,* SFX6), but seeing how much you enjoyed it, here are a few more Spanish names for you:

Highlander in Spain was *Los Inmortales* ("The Immortals"); *The Creature from the Black Lagoon* was named *La Mujer Y El Monstruo* ("The Woman and the Monster" – awful!); and *Night of the Creeps* turned into *El Terror Llama A Su Puerta* ("Terror is Knocking on Your Door" – puaggghhh!).

The Blob was named *El Terror No Tiene Forma,* which means "Terror Has No Shape" (or sense of humour...); Terence Fisher's masterpiece *The Gorgon* turned into *La Leyenda De Vandorff* ("The Vandorff's Legend") and *The Devil Rides Out* was named *La Batalla de Satan* – "Satan's Battle."

Not many people know that!

Carlos Bielsa Gibaja
Spain

PS. Don't worry – in Spain *Blake's 7, Doctor Who* and *Star Trek* kept their original titles, thank God.

El Terror Llama *is the most brilliant title for a horror flick we've ever heard!*

"LOOKING THROUGH A GREY LENS"

Dear SFX,
Why is everything being labelled "cyberpunk" these days? Cyberpunk, as anyone who has read the Will Gibson novels knows, is a *very* specific area. Cyberpunk deals with the future in an only slightly distorted way, and looks at it through a grey lens. In cyberpunk novels, there are no good guys and no baddies. All the characters are at first motivated by money, but may then develop a personal edge, and therefore acquire good or bad characteristics.

The other thing cyberpunk deals with is technology. All the Will Gibson novels had the Net (cyberspace) and all had a new piece of technology. *Neuromancer* had the next generation computer virus and an AI, *Count Zero* had the brain implants in Angie, and *Mona Lisa Overdrive* had the LF strapped to the Count's head. This is also shown in the two other true cyberpunk offerings: *Blade Runner* (no baddies, no real goodies, and the new technology of the simulants) and *Akira* (no baddies, no real goodies, and a new form of

NOWT AS QUEER AS SF FOLK

In reply to SL Kell's letter in SFX6, you stated that it was hinted that Talia in *B5* was gay/bisexual. Surely, it's Ivanova who was (strongly) hinted as being gay? Talia was trying to infiltrate into the command structure by using her.

Duncan Entwisle
cyberspace

I only hope Talia returns and sweeps Ivanova off her feet!

Jayne
Portland

As for "cured" homosexuals in TV SF, the *Next Generation* episode "The Outcast" comes to mind, in which a woman from an asexual society falls in love with Riker; the "aberration" is later cured. This was one of the better attempts by the series' makers to deal with a serious subject by calling it something else.

A Neitham
Chichester

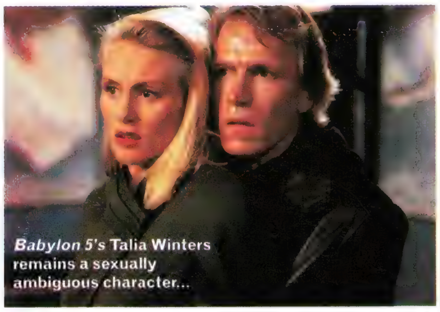
When Kirk spends yet another episode snogging his way through the population of the Planet of the Half-Naked Nymphettes, something is clearly being said about his sexuality. Of course, no-one makes a fuss because heterosexuality is the accepted norm.

Chris King
Gillingham

Are you sure no-one makes a fuss about Kirk's heterosexual libido? We thought it was a standing joke in the SF world.

Who cares if a character is gay or not, as long as it's in keeping with the rest of the story? Some will moan if there's too many gay characters around, and others will moan if there's not enough. Basically, you're buggered if you do, and you're buggered if you don't!

Alan Holloway
Bristol



Babylon 5's Talia Winters remains a sexually ambiguous character...

COMICS ARE FOR KIDS, AREN'T THEY?

We had several heated responses to Michelle Varney's diatribe against novelisations and graphic novels in SFX5. Here are a few of your reactions to Michelle's controversial letter...

Being one of those sad people who actually read comics and graphic novels, no, I don't find it a struggle to read through reams of text, otherwise I wouldn't have those 500-plus sci-fi and fantasy books sitting on my shelves. For somebody who is supposedly literate and has patience to – gasp! – wade through hundreds of words in a novel, I find it amazing that Michelle Varney doesn't have the patience to read and look at a comic that is essentially telling a story.

Denby, denby.liu@almac.co.uk

If Michelle is happy in her world, then why disturb her? If all she can see in a graphic novel is pictures, what is to be gained by her enlightenment? Read your "proper SF" Michelle, and enjoy.

Dean Cracknell, Alton

I feel comics/graphic novels have a very influential and important part to play in people's education. I think Michelle's comments come from a conservative, "scandal-rag" journalistic viewpoint based on very little understanding.

Kevin Elliott, Lanarkshire

When it comes down to it, all writers deal in one thing and that's images. If they can't conjure up an image in your head then they're no good. In a comic, the artist sets the images in stone, and the writer can exercise his skill at dialogue to its utmost. Comics work on a different level, doing different things than the pure written word.

Matt Patterson, Tipton

The reason for the proliferation of the "blood and guts" end in the comics market is that it sells – and the people who buy this stuff are interested not in comics *per se,* but in the images they see. You may as well damn Longfellow because all the shops you visit stock sleazy paperbacks.

John Schiltz, Ipswich

Isn't it the author's job to create a story which is original and refreshing, whatever genre he or she chooses to write in? Agreed, *Star Trek* novels provide the setting and characters, but many provide new and excellent premises too.

Robert Newman, Swindon

I was encouraged into reading by my family and by the use of science fiction tie-ins. If it wasn't for a handful of tie-in novels, I probably wouldn't be reading nearly as much as I do now, which includes not only tie-ins but work by Larry Niven, EE "Doc" Smith, Anne McCaffrey and Philip K Dick, as well as much more classical fare.

Kevin I Buchanan, Cardiff

THE SFX WAIF BOX...

THIS MONTH, WE ALSO HEARD FROM THE FOLLOWING...

Ms Denise Knight, South Africa; **Victor Hallett**, Prestatyn; **Michael Healy**, Merseyside; **David Dunnett**, Ross-shire; **Michael O'Neill**, London; **Toby Lattimore**, Merseyside; **John Hadlow**, Devon; **Christopher M Rogers**, Edgware; **Andy Grant**, Croydon; **J Warnock**, Co. Down; **Peter Springall**, Warwick; **Nigel Thornton-Clark**, cyberspace; **Mr W Gimbird**, Romford; **Michael Healy**, Merseyside; **Stephen James**, Farnborough; **John Gray**, Braintree; **Leigh Milne**, Lanark; **Bill Bulloch**, Skelmersdale; **Mr AG Service**, Luton; **Mark Edwards**, London; **David Heffron**, cyberspace; **Alan Maxwell**, cyberspace; **Dermot McElroy**, Dundalk; **Adrian Downie**, Leighton Buzzard.

Our thanks to the following smart alecs who all wrote to tell us what "Sufism" means: **Peter Armstrong** and **Iain Jewitt**, cyberspace; **Andy Sawyer**, SF Foundation; **Keith Parker**, Tunbridge Wells. Next time we'll bother to look in the dictionary...

mental superpowers). This is cyberpunk; it's not some trendy word to use to describe anything that might be "dark."

Andrew Hutchins
Northampton

Anybody care to disagree with Andrew's definition of cyberpunk?

"THE ESSENTIAL PROBLEM"

Greetings Earthlings,

I'm a 33 year old graphic designer, brought up through the space age of Apollo and Soyuz and nurtured on space and fantasy through my teens with *Star Wars* and its imitators. The problem with sci-fi is that it has always been regarded as the province of nine year olds and not adults. If (as every Xmas) I include manga videos or *Star Wars* novels on my present list, I get the same sarcastic remarks I've heard since I was 15.

There is a certain stigma attached to the genre, which has been imposed by the "public" face of sci-fi – the ham acting in *Power Rangers,* for example, or the extroverts with their full Starfleet uniforms parading around proudly on breakfast TV. Laughably bad American (and British) TV series such as *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea* and the flakier episodes of *Doctor Who* and *Blake's 7* have done little to change the already tarnished image.

The essential problem is that as sci-fi covers such a wide area of thought it's sometimes easier to jump on one of the larger bandwagons to reach the public eye than to ride into the sunset on a tiny minority interest which is lost in the dust cloud from the thundering wagons of popularity. Like any cult or genre, part of the popularity is fuelled by merchandising and in order for something to sell well, it needs to be marketed. In order for a marketing strategy to be understood and accepted, it must be able to reach a target audience, and the generally perceived audience of sci-fi is somewhere around 9-14 years old. Consequently, a lot of TV or magazine sci-fi suffers from the sensationalising process, and, nine times out of ten, the original concept changes beyond all recognition in the race to meet the current fad.

Like the unfortunate EBE that was executed at the hands of Deep Throat, true science fiction may never be accepted by the masses because the idea is always too different to entertain.

Bill Bulloch
Skelmersdale

INFO BITES

Jim Barlow, cyberspace: *"Having watched the Sci-Fi Channel for about two weeks now, I respectfully suggest it should be renamed* 'The Wrath of Khan *Channel,*' *since that bloody film seems to be on every other day!"*

Kathryn Quinn, cyberspace: *"Do you have any plans to teach the unenlightened how to make plastic model kits? I haven't got a clue. Any pointers would be most helpful."* Try the magazine *Sci-Fi & Fantasy Models, £2.95,* from all good newsagents, which is edited by SFX contributor Mike Reccia.

Paul Barker, Darlington: *"I disagree that Lois MacMaster Bujold's* Mirror Dance *isn't deep. What about the superb character development of Mark?"*

Leslie Skingle, London: "Species *disregards all the conventions of the genre. There was no escapist value and not a single well-orchestrated effects sequence. But the novelisation is something of an improvement over the movie."*

Nicholas O'Leary, Cornwall: *"I was surprised, when I looked over your list of titles of Robert Rankin's work, to see that you had missed off the sequel to* The Book of Ultimate Truths, Raiders of the Lost Car Park *and the fourth in the Brentford trilogy,* The Sprouts of Wrath." Those two books were dropped because we had no room for them. For the record, here are Robert's comments on *Sprouts:* "If you were going to set the Olympics anywhere in England, it would have to be Brentford, wouldn't it? And if you were going to set it in Brentford, you would have to build the bastard up in the sky, because there's nowhere else to put it." And *Raiders:* "I couldn't finish the first one, because they had to have further adventures. So I just sat down and said, 'I haven't finished the first book,' and carried on."

Steven O'Neill, Newcastle upon Tyne: "Deep Space Nine *has to be the best and most adventurous of all the* Trek *franchises."*

John McKee, Cornwall: *"I do not agree that only a 'sparse range of merchandise' was available at Aliens '95. There was lots on offer. I spent £130 and I'm only 14."* £130!? How much pocket money do you get?

Rachel Turlington, Co. Armagh: *"I recently bought and read* The Hallows *by Michael Scott (Creed Signet). Could you tell me more about this author?"* Scott's other books include *A Celtic Odyssey, House of the Dead, Lottery* and *Irish Ghosts & Hauntings.* His next novel, *Banba,* will be published by Creed in March.

Hilary Chapman, Gwynedd: *"Harry Harrison is right that Esperanto is remarkably easy to learn. For those unable to attend an evening class, a new, free introductory postal course is available. Lesson One can be obtained for a large SAE from* ***The Esperanto Centre, 140 Holland Park Ave, London W11 4UF.*** *It knocks Klingon into a cocked hat!"*

Matt Patterson, Tipton: *"6oz Mushrooms. Six Carrots. Head of brocolli (No Brown.) A Green Pepper."* Are you sure you meant to put this in your envelope?

Huw Adams, Milford Haven: *"In your first issue, you featured a CD of Vivaldi's* Compleat Four Seasons *by Patrick Stewart, Arnie Roth and Musica Anima. Since then, I have looked everywhere to buy it but to no avail."* If you quote the label and catalogue number – American Gramophone AGCD 801 – in any good classical music store, they should be able to order it for you.

Chris Fowler, London: *"Nice article on John Clute and his new book* The Illustrated SF Encyclopedia. *But surely that photo on page eight is not John, but his dopplegänger Nhoj Etulc, from* Mirror World?"

Tim Mewton, Malmesbury: *"I plan to start up a fanzine in the near future and was wondering if there are any copyright rules concerning the printing of pictures, extracts from books, etc?"* If you are just producing for a non-profit-making fanzine, nobody will be too worried about copyright – we hope! We definitely recommend you *don't* lift artwork or text from other fanzines without permission, though.

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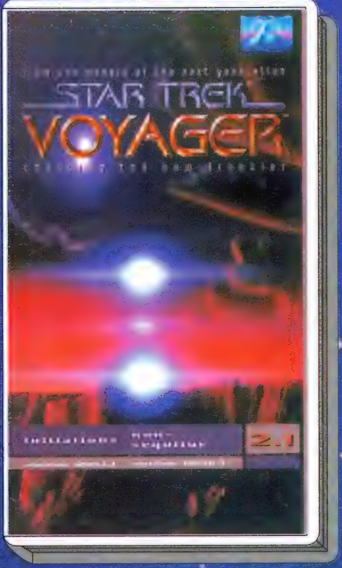

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SFX 002

HOME ENTERTAINMENT

David Langford

Hell's Cartographer

Rob Scott

"When your memory's dodgy, and you may see pink lizards crawling up the walls, who's going to believe your reports of horrid astral attacks?"

This has been a bad year for SF and fantasy... We lost Roger Zelazny. We lost Michael Ende of *Neverending Story* fame. We lost John Brunner. Also gone are Ian Ballantine, who co-founded the major US SF/fantasy publisher Ballantine Books; editor Charles Monteith, moving spirit of the once-great Faber SF list; British SF author Christopher Hodder-Williams; and too many others who weren't so famous, but still held the SF community together.

In fact, 1995's been such a bad year I kept remembering a certain borderline-SF novel that's haunted by the idea of passing through a lethal node of time, a zone ruled by death. This 1966 novel is called The Anti-Death League – and shortly after I'd quoted it to friends, its author Sir Kingsley Amis was dead too. Most unsettling.

Statisticians know that deaths can be expected to come in clusters. Our emotions know the exact opposite.

Amis was a major British novelist by any standards (his Booker Prize for *The Old Devils* was richly deserved), and the usual media obituaries gave him a good send-off. Even the most snobbish eulogist could hardly ignore Amis's fondness for popular fiction, but some of them still managed to downplay his lifelong interests. He liked and wrote spy stories (including one James Bond novel), detective puzzles, supernatural horror and science fiction.

Even his "respectable" comic novels were refreshingly unsnobbish about SF magazines. Characters reckon it's, gosh, *normal* to read SF magazines. In his *Ending Up,* a blackly funny tale of senile delinquency, someone hunts for the perfect image of what it's like visiting bad relatives: "Do you know that SF story where the space pilots or something do six hours on and six months off because it's so shagging? Cordwainer Smith, that's right. I thought he was overdoing it rather until I turned up here today."

Much earlier, in the '50s, Amis was invited to give a series of critical lectures at Princeton University, USA. To general amazement, he chose SF for his subject, and expanded the lectures into a witty little volume which was very nearly the first major book of SF criticism: *New Maps of Hell.* It's dated now (the introduction mentions Brian Aldiss as a promising newcomer), but still highly enjoyable. Gollancz produced a British edition in 1961, and was inspired to publish many of the authors praised in its pages. Of course, the Gollancz SF list is still well known, and it's all Amis's fault...

Another helping hand for SF was the meaty '60s *Spectrum* anthology series, co-edited by Amis and Robert Conquest. Amis himself wrote a few short SF and fantasy stories, and two reasonably good SF novels. *The Alteration* follows the well-known alternative history tradition, with Britain under repressive Catholic rule. *Russian Hide and Seek* is a near-future dystopia (somewhat less plausible now than in 1980) showing Britain under repressive post-Communist Russian rule. This earned Amis a telling-off from Margaret Thatcher, who, like so many important people, was too dim to realise the difference between fiction and prophecy. "Can't you do any better than that?" she shrieked. "Get yourself another crystal ball!"

His best genre novel, though, is surely *The Green Man,* a supernatural horror story which is also wickedly comic. The narrator is a typical Amis hero... Ageing, unheroic, caddish, highly entertaining and over-fond of sex and booze. In fact, he's on the edge of alcoholism, making him the perfect tool for the spirit of an ambitious and sadistic 17th century magician who wants to make a comeback.

When your memory's dodgy, and you may at any moment see pink lizards crawling up the walls, who's going to believe your reports of horrid astral attacks? This leads to a light-hearted yet deeply chilling interview with God, who regards the whole thing as a bit of a game and expects the frazzled, hungover hero to deal with the magician (and his repulsive woodland golem) all by himself. Fine, creepy stuff.

In his later years, Amis was notoriously a curmudgeon – but there was nothing grumpy about the speed and enthusiasm with which he wrote a new appreciation of Robert Sheckley when I begged this favour for a convention souvenir book. He did often grumble about what had befallen SF in the hands of the dread academics whose attention he'd first attracted with *New Maps of Hell.* Maybe he was right.

Overall, Kingsley Amis was a seriously funny author who did much for SF and wrote many novels of all kinds that stand up to re-reading.

Yes, 1995 has been a bad year, a very bad year...

Issue 101 of David Langford's Hugo award-winning fanzine Ansible, *which looks certain to run and run, is out now...*

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John Grant

So Long, So Bad

Rob Scott

> "Crap novels are those that concentrate on tale-telling, which used to be – in the days of such Crap writers as Dickens and Collins – what novel-writing was all about."

Recently, for professional reasons which I shall not disclose (not even for That Pint), I read the manuscript of a new work of skiffy which will be hitting the bookstores next Spring. In typescript, it reached just over 700 pages, so when printed it's likely to be around 600 pages long.

In other words, it's a seriously Long Book.

Furthermore, it's only the second volume in a series that seems set to go on for several more... For similar professional reasons I had to read, some months ago, the first volume of said series – another Long Book.

The two volumes had something else in common besides being Long. They were both CC.

Let me explain some terminology here. According to my own classification system, fiction can be divided into four categories: Good Good, Crap Good, Good Crap and Crap Crap. In the first two categories you find the stuff that's generally reviewed in the broadsheet newspapers and the TLS. These are novels which have either genuine aspirations to be something new or original (i.e. GG), or more often pretend to be hot stuff but are in fact best used for lighting the fire (i.e. CG).

There is no worse fate than being trapped on a long train journey with nothing to read but a CG novel.

Conversely, having a GC novel to read on a train journey is ideal. Crap novels are those that concentrate on tale-telling, which used to be – in the days of such Crap writers as, say, Charles Dickens and Wilkie Collins – what novel-writing was all about. Such novels can contain subtexts, be metafictions or subversive, or possess an agenda, but the up-front bit – the bit you appreciate – is that they're *stories*. A GC novel, then, is such a well told tale that, before you know it, your train journey is over, or you've missed your station...

Being stuck on a train with a CC novel is almost as bad as having its CG counterpart in front of you (and possibly worse, since at least with the CG book your fellow-passengers notice you've fallen asleep into something respectable). The difference between GC and CC is therefore one of competence.

Which leads me back to the Long Book whose typescript I read a few weeks ago. The author is the reasonably well known Fred Bloke. His books don't sell on the scale of a Stephen King or a Dan Simmons, but they do pretty tidily in your local WH Smith. And yet they're, to be blunt, incompetent.

The aim of a Crap novel is to entertain. GC does just that; CC doesn't. But the margin by which CC fails can be big or small. You can plough through to the end of a CC novel and not feel you've been cheated, just that you'd have been wiser spending your money on a Big Mac; or you can get ten pages into a bit of CC and then realise, if you tried to use it for kindling, the flames wouldn't catch – out of disgust...

In Fred's two Long Books nothing happens. Oh, yes, the cast have vague adventures (involving a lot of gratuitous bloodshed and, to lighten things, strained-bladder jokes), but you never feel that any progress is made between page one and page 700. The characterization is so poor that frequently the author himself gets mixed up between his players, assigning to one of them traits that belong to another. The plot has the recurrent problem that Fred can't remember what he wrote 200 pages ago. And there's no imagination displayed, either. All the seemingly imaginative bits can be swiftly traced to other people's works. Pick up one of Fred's Long Books and you are straying into an arid waste of bad writing and... Well, to be honest, little else.

I mentioned demurely ("This is the worst shit I've ever come across") my reservations about Fred's second Long Book to its publisher, and was told that the first in the series had sold rather well, so obviously they were keen to release the sequel.

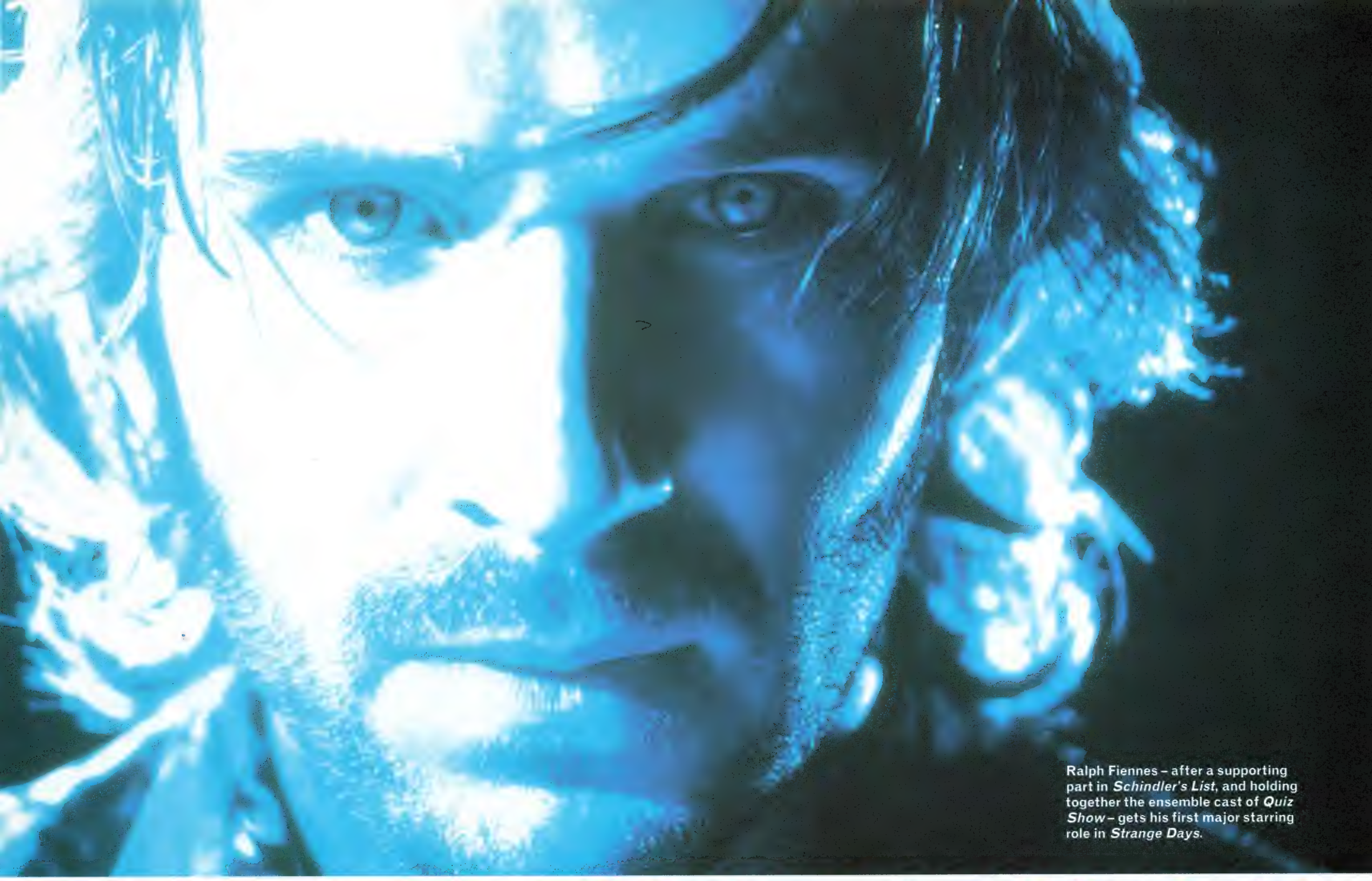
At this year's World SF Convention I was on a discussion panel with, among others, Guy Gavriel Kay, who announced portentously that it was impossible to continue publishing bad books. They didn't sell. I disagreed loudly – and Fred's books prove, I think, my point.

It is, of course, not Fred's fault that his books sell (while all of, say, John Brunner's are currently out of print), and it's not the fault of Fred's editor, who has the accountants to answer to.

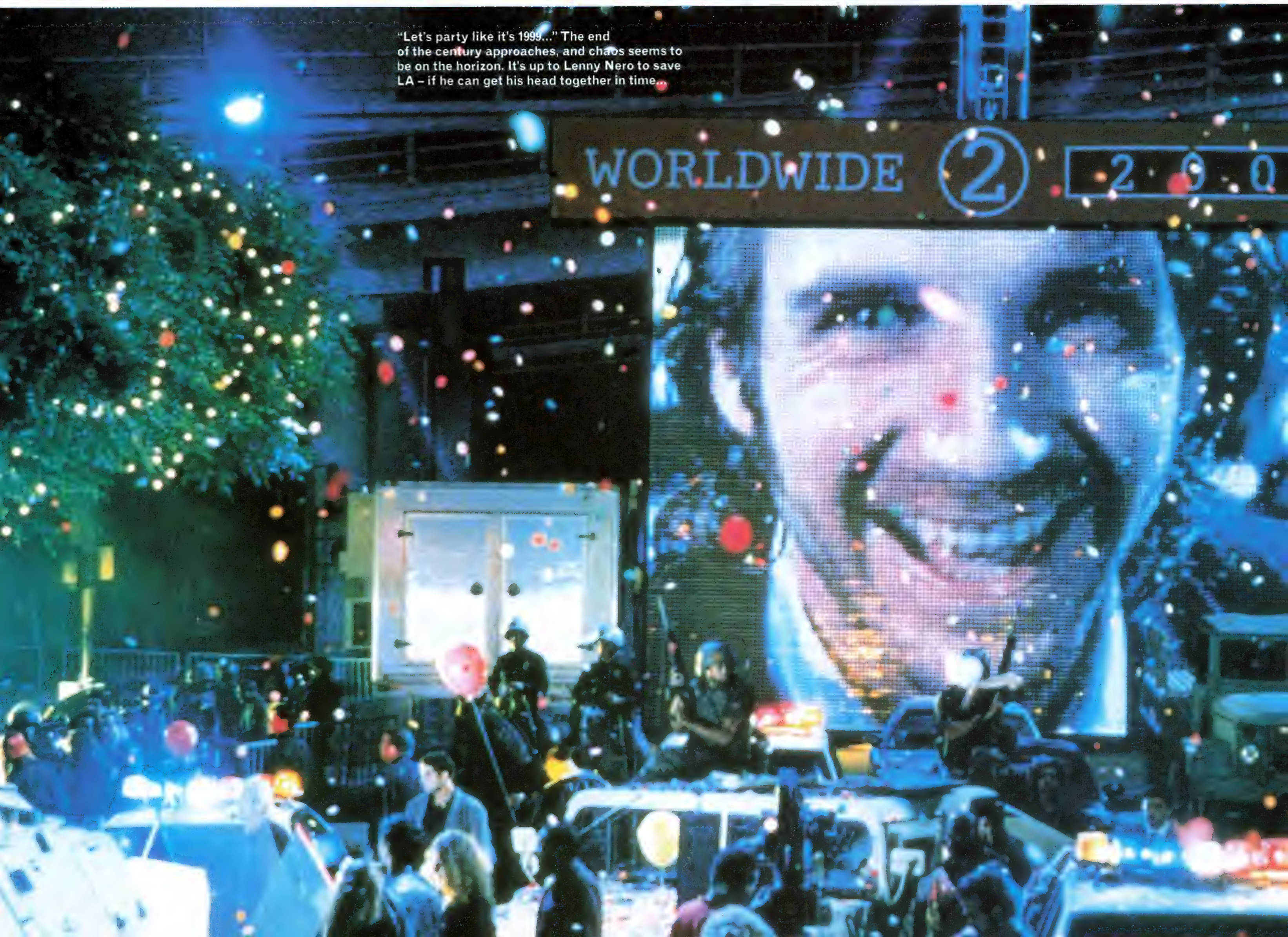
No, if you want to think about whose fault it is, just ponder the fact that you can't guess who Fred Bloke really is. He could be any one of a score of current skiffy writers. After all, you may have some of his books on your shelf...

I do.

John Grant is still hard at work on his labour of love, The Encyclopedia of Fantasy.



Ralph Fiennes – after a supporting part in *Schindler's List*, and holding together the ensemble cast of *Quiz Show* – gets his first major starring role in *Strange Days*.



"Let's party like it's 1999..." The end of the century approaches, and chaos seems to be on the horizon. It's up to Lenny Nero to save LA – if he can get his head together in time...

future daze

Sci-fi films – or, at least, films with a sci-fi setting – are a Hollywood staple these days, but big, serious SF movies, with a genuine point to make, are still few and far between. Which is why Strange Days – conceived by Terminator, Aliens and The Abyss creator James Cameron, and starring the ultra-hot Ralph Fiennes – is causing such a ruckus. **Nigel Floyd** talks to director Kathryn Bigelow about the movie some are already comparing to Blade Runner...

Despite its decidedly non-futuristic look – hey, it *is* set only four years into the future – *Strange Days* is one of the most ambitious science fiction films of recent years. Indeed, you could argue it's one of the few genuine science fiction films of recent years. It's not a comic book, it's not a fantasy – some might say it's about the only film of 1995 that you could possibly mention in the same breath as *Blade Runner, The Abyss,* or *2001*.

Directed by Kathryn Bigelow – ex-wife of SF *auteur* James Cameron, and director of interesting films like *Near Dark, Blue Steel* and *Point Break* – *Strange Days* is part action-film, part *film noir,* part techno-thriller, part political commentary, part love story, and *all* SF. Co-scripted by Cameron and journo Jay Cocks ("I came to this from more of a Raymond Chandler angle than a William Gibson one," Cocks claims), this is a hardware movie with a heart, and one of the most ambitious genre films in ages.

"The challenge," explains Bigelow, "was to create a hybrid movie that would maintain the balance between two different strands. Essentially, it's the story of these two characters, Lenny and Mace, set on the eve of the millennium in a flash-point society where a technology has been invented that enables you to experience slices of other people's lives. These 'clips' are now being sold on the black market. What we wanted to do was maintain the balance between that social canvas and the more intimate love story – which is something far more personal and, obviously, more emotional. Trying to keep the fragile balance between the two was tough, because we didn't want the science fiction landscape to become so overbearing, so extraordinary, so excessive, or so far-reaching that the romance would get lost in it."

> **"What *Strange Days* does is hold a mirror up to society and show the violence, tensions, struggles and economic disparities for what they are. And if people don't like what they see reflected there, I don't think they can fault the mirror..."**
>
> **Kathryn Bigelow, director**

* * *

Although her highly "visceral, cathartic, high-impact" style of film-making is duplicated by precious few female directors, Kathryn Bigelow denies that her success in this clearly male-dominated arena is anything special – or even unusual. In fact, she reckons her sex isn't really all that important when it comes to the way she makes films...

"Those notions ghettoise men and women," she argues, "and that's certainly not what I aspire to. I think that a film is made by a film-maker whose vision is singular, and therefore not like anybody else's. It doesn't have anything to do with gender, because I don't think it's a gender-specific enterprise. That's not to say that you don't bring to the screen a personal vision – a vision that's informed by life experience – however. And, yes, that life

Kathryn Bigelow, one of the few female action film-makers, has a history of subverting genre movies,from *Near Dark* to *Strange Days*...

Kathryn Bigelow, working on the set of *Strange Days*. The script was partly written by her ex-husband, James (*Aliens, Terminator, Abyss*) Cameron. Much tinier cameras than this one were used for the "point of view" scenes...

experience *is* informed by gender. But I think that to talk about it in those terms tends to narrow all our visions."

Certainly, there's little sign of narrow vision in *Strange Days*. Although Bigelow's films have often operated within a genre framework of one sort or another, she tends to add unexpected elements to the mix. Her 1981 debut feature, *The Loveless,* co-directed by Monty Montgomery, fused the iconography of the '50s biker movie with static, painterly images that recalled Edward Hopper's art; in her "vampire Western" *Near Dark,* a band of modern-day blood-suckers roamed the flat cornfields of the American Mid-West; in *Blue Steel,* rookie cop Jamie Lee Curtis and serial killer Ron Silver became locked into a violently eroticised symbiotic relationship; and in *Point Break,* Keanu Reeves' stiff-jawed FBI agent was seduced by the wave-riding and sky-diving thrills enjoyed by Patrick Swayze and his hedonistic bank robber pals. *Strange Days* is a similar mixture of unexpected elements.

But if there is one common thread running through her work, it's a fascination with marginal groups or individuals, whose peripheral lifestyles throw into relief the moral values of "normal" society. This theme takes centre-stage in *Strange Days,* a film in which all the major characters are dysfunctional in one way or another. Star of the show is Lenny Nero, played by Ralph Fiennes, an ex-vice cop turned seller of bootleg dreams – black market "clips" that capture fragments of people's real lives, which others can then "jack into" and vicariously enjoy. Recorded using "wire" technology that duplicates the point-of-view and adrenaline rush experienced by the wearer, these "clips" then incite the same responses in the lucky (or, in some cases, highly unlucky) viewer. Or as Lenny, the self-styled "Santa Claus of the Subconscious," puts it:

"This is not like TV only better. This is life – a piece of somebody's life. Pure and uncut, straight from the cerebral cortex. You're there. You're doing it, seeing it, hearing it... feeling it."

> **"The script was presented to me almost four years ago, on the heels of the Rodney King incident and the riots that followed... I was involved in the clean-up of downtown Los Angeles, and quite a lot of the images [in the film] come from that experience... I felt we needed to take responsibility for that cultural history."**
>
> **Kathryn Bigelow, director**

The SQUID (Superconducting Quantum Interference Device) apparatus that records these memories – perhaps the only piece of genuinely futuristic hardware in *Strange Days* – is a fairly simple looking device, resembling a metal hair-net, but in order to represent the unique point-of-view that it affords the wearer, Bigelow and her camera team had to invent some movie technology of their own. You see, although fluid hand-held camerawork has become something of a Bigelow trademark – used most memorably in the extended foot-chase sequence in *Point Break* – the adrenalised immediacy of the 'wire' sequences presented its own unique set of problems.

"The agenda was to replicate the human eye and the instantaneous way it adjusts," Bigelow explains. "We tend to take for granted the flexibility and fluidity with which the eye flicks around a room. To achieve that effect with a 40lb Panaglide camera is virtually impossible, so we had to build a special camera that weighed only 8lbs. It could literally be held in one hand, but could still be fitted with all the necessary, interchangeable 35mm lenses."

The special camera – dubbed the Helmet Integrated Display System – was built by Cameron's company, Lightstorm Technologies, to very precise specifications. The important thing, explains *Strange Days'* director of photography Matthew Leonettie, was that the camera, "could not be to the right of somebody's head. It had to *be* somebody's head." In fact, in almost every way the effect Bigelow was after was very different to that associated with traditional, documentary-style hand-held filming.

"I didn't want it to be strictly hand-held, because that would create too much movement within the frame," she insists. "When you're moving, your brain tends to equalise a lot of that movement out, otherwise your vision would be very distorted. So we built a kind of stripped-down Steadicam apparatus to go with this camera – one that was de-tuned, so to speak, so it didn't give you that complete fluidity,

1999 And All That

It's set only four years into the future, so the conception and realisation of the literally fin de siècle world of Strange Days demanded a good deal of visionary restraint, as **Dave Hughes** discovered...

"One of the things we discussed at length in pre-production was how we'd define the look of the future," says producer Steven-Charles Jaffe, well aware that *Strange Days'* dystopian world, urban setting, and dark, wet look would all beg comparison with Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner.* The proximity of *Days'* future made this a very different challenge, however – massive attention to detail would be required, rather than wild flights of fantasy.

When production designer Lilly Kilvert was called upon to create a futuristic, apocalyptic version of LA, she found all her problems boiled down to one central act of guesswork. "It was very difficult to find just the right amount of change," she remembers. "Highways, buildings and even car design isn't going to change *that* radically in four years..."

"We didn't want to do tech and glitz," continues screenwriter Jay Cocks. "We wanted to do 'street.' And we wanted to give a very vivid sense of a city in terminal social disorder." Choosing LA as the setting was easy, according to his co-writer, James Cameron. "I think LA is really the only choice for movie that's about the apocalypse," he says. "It seems to be inherently a flashpoint culture; it's such a mix of racial and ethnic types."

One of *Strange Days'* critical scenes takes place at the film's climax – New Year's Eve celebrations 1999-style. Producer Jaffe describes filming these packed crowd scenes as a "behemoth effort" in logistics, and showers nothing but praise on Bigelow, who co-ordinated them along with a small army of production assistants. In addition, second unit crews shot footage at a number of real New Year's Eve celebrations, giving out anachronistic placards reading "Happy New Year 2000" in several different languages to add the right flavour.

Not that this sort of epic film-making was necessarily *that* important... "All the epic qualities are really at the service of story and character," Bigelow points out. "It all takes place in somebody's lines, or across somebody's face."

> **"We didn't want to do tech and glitz; we wanted to do 'street.' We wanted to give a vivid sense of a city in terminal social disorder."**
>
> **Jay Cocks, screenwriter**

Strange Days features some very impressive sets, including this giant warehouse affair, used for the night club scenes. However, some sequences were shot on location in the real streets of LA for added realism.

Below left: Lenny Nero (Fiennes), in his distinctive leather-trousers-greasy-hair-and-loud-shirts ensemble, chills out. Below right: Real end-of-year parties were filmed for the crowd scenes!

He's an ex-cop, knows how to use a gun – and yet still gets beaten up everywhere he goes. Fiennes makes a likeable, believable hero – but it's a good job Mace (Angela Bassett) is on his side, or he wouldn't survive beyond the film's halfway mark...

which would have been too languid and floaty to achieve the impact I was looking for. After that, it was a question of choreographing and storyboarding every scene in minute detail, so we could disguise the edits within rapid camera movements to preserve the illusion of these sequences being completely unbroken."

As anyone who's seen the film will tell you, it works extremely well.

* * *

MANY OF THE MOST STRIKING SEQUENCES IN STRANGE DAYS, IN FACT, feature the various "clips" Ralph Fiennes' character sells. These synthetic experiences range from crude home-made porno to real-life crime; but if his trade is dubious, so too is his anaesthetised customers' insatiable demand for even more authentic-seeming slices of life. As Bigelow explains, "Lenny Nero says, 'We all need to take a walk to the dark end of the street sometime, but sex can kill you and the streets are a war zone.' And as people move further behind their high-security fences, which actually prevent them from experiencing life as they once knew it, so their appetite for genuine experience increases. But what they don't realise is that 'the wire' is not the technology to satisfy that craving. In fact, it's a pacifier that prevents them from focusing on the social issues which created that siege mentality in the first place."

> **"This is not a movie that's designed to pacify – it's designed to be provocative, to push some buttons."**
>
> **Kathryn Bigelow, director**

What sort of issues is she talking about? Well, how about poverty, racial discrimination and the abuse of political power for starters?

Strange Days is set in 1999, and as the millennium approaches, the riot-torn streets of Los Angeles reach flash-point when militant rap artist Jeriko One is gunned down in cold blood. Shortly afterwards, images and reality collide when Lenny Nero learns that a young prostitute who used to do 'wire' work for him has been murdered. A confusing trail leads him back to his ex-lover Faith (Juliette Lewis), who's now hitched up with Jeriko One's sleazy producer Philo Gant (Michael Wincott). With the help of private eye Max (Tom Sizemore) and chauffeur/security expert Mace (Angela Bassett), Lenny tries to unravel the mystery. A missing "clip," it seems, contains incriminating footage that, if broadcast on TV, could turn the greatest New Year's party of them all into the riot to end all riots.

There are scenes in *Strange Days* that clearly echo the home movie footage of Rodney King being beaten by police officers, footage that sparked off the Los Angeles riots – and the decision to present them as such was both intentional, and crucial to the film, says Bigelow.

"The script was presented to me almost four years ago, on the heels of the Rodney King incident and the riots that followed," she explains. "I was involved in the clean-up of downtown Los Angeles, and quite a lot of the images come from that experience... I felt we needed to take responsibility for that cultural history."

In many ways, *Strange Days* is an attempt to do just that.

* * *

THE MOST EXTENDED, CONTROVERSIAL AND DANGEROUSLY AMBIGUOUS use the film makes of Bigelow's subjective hand-held camera occurs when Lenny watches a 'blackjack' disk – a disk that shows the rape and murder of a young woman by a masked assailant. Because the killer is wearing a SQUID filming device at the time, he's been able to record a horrifying 'snuff' movie seen through his eyes – a point-of-view which his victim, by means of a signal-splitting device, is forced to share as she is slowly stripped, raped and strangled. Like Lenny, we, the audience, are forced to witness these events from the murderer's point-of-view – a reflexive device that's meant to expose our complicity, our questionable fascination, with this type of repellent, voyeuristic spectacle. It's a segment of the film that's guaranteed to haunt you long after you've left the cinema...

Indeed, some commentators have compared *Strange Days* to Michael Powell's provocative *Peeping Tom*, and Bigelow herself cites the shower scene in Hitchcock's *Psycho* as a model. Yet these comparisons fall well short of the scene's distressing, uncontrolled impact – an impact strong enough to create complicated, contradictory gut reactions in the audience. To be fair to Bigelow, she has sincere and cogent arguments to back up her use of this sequence, maintaining that repeated cut-aways to Lenny's shocked reactions re-contextualise what might otherwise have been a crudely exploitative scene.

"This is a movie about watching, and I don't think you can make a movie about watching without scenes in which people watch," Bigelow explains. "I know that the scene is disturbing, but that is intentional. Rape is disturbing. It is not meant to titillate, it's meant to horrify. This

Tomorrow People

"IT'S THE END OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT, AND I FEEL FIENNES (AND BASSETT AND LEWIS)," PUNS A DESPERATE **DAVE HUGHES,** AS HE REVEALS WHO'S WHO IN STRANGE DAYS...

Lenny's a mess – but he's still got his wits, his friends, and a sliver of genuine morality. Just *maybe* he'll get by.

Want a strong woman in a film for a change? You got it. Angela Bassett's Mace is hard as nails, but with a heart.

Juliette Lewis plays Hope – yet the one hope Nero has is that he'll finally get her out of his system, and move on.

For all its futuristic fantasy, technology and "millennium madness," the action of *Strange Days* chiefly revolves around its three main characters, all played by Oscar-nominees – Ralph Fiennes, Angela Bassett and Juliette Lewis. According to producer Steven-Charles Jaffe (who produced Bigelow's earlier *Near Dark*, plus science fiction outings *Star Trek VI, The Fly II* and *Demon Seed*, and co-directed the nuclear nightmare thriller *The Day After*), "The most important thing was casting the right actors to flesh out these incredible characters."

"I always had in mind the fate of this one guy, Lenny Nero, and his ability to find out what's right and wrong," says creator James Cameron. "If one person can elevate or redeem themselves, then, by extrapolation, we all can."

Lenny Nero (Ralph Fiennes): "LOSER"

Nero – the sleazy, self-styled "Santa Claus of the Subconscious" – is a former LA vice cop, who makes his living selling other people's dreams.

"He's a hustler, a loser, who's slid into selling this illegal form of visual narcotic," says raffish Brit Ralph Fiennes, who first caught Bigelow's eye – and the attention of the world – with his chilling, Oscar-nominated portrayal of Nazi commandant Amon Goeth in Spielberg's *Schindler's List*.

"The role of Lenny Nero required somebody who had a tremendous amount of intelligence, complexity, depth and a wide range of emotion," Bigelow explains. "A series of qualities that I felt only Ralph could supply."

Cameron had originally imagined Nero to be "glibber and slicker," but ended up admiring the "honesty and vulnerability" that Fiennes brought to the role...

"He makes it a much sexier character, a guy you could care about," he concludes. "There's reality in the way Ralph plays it. You say, 'I get this guy. He seems real to me.'"

Lornette "Mace" Mason (Anglea Bassett): "KICKS ASS"

Providing a moral counterpoint to the wayward Nero is his best friend, Lornette "Mace" Mason (Angela Bassett), whose "real world" problems as a black single mother define an even harsher reality than Lenny's, for whom Bigelow says she is a "moral preservative." Cameron describes her more prosaically: "She's very strong, very capable and she kicks everybody's ass." This may be why Bassett, who was nominated for an Academy Award in *What's Love Got to Do with It?*, says that Mace feels like a role written for a man. "But then you hear that the character was always perceived as a black woman and it's just really cool and very right."

Bassett was already cast by the time co-screenwriter Jay Cocks began turning Cameron's treatment/script hybrid into a fully fledged screenplay – a fact that helped him to more clearly define her character. "Angela is just so immediate, and she throws out so much energy," he enthuses, "that you can harness a little bit of that and just throw it right back on the page."

Faith (Juliette Lewis): "A REVELATION"

Rounding off the central triptych is Juliette Lewis – the actress who came to prominence in Scorsese's *Cape Fear*, and who played Woody Harrelson's psycho girlfriend in Stone's controversial *Natural Born Killers* – as Faith, Nero's fiery rock singer ex-girlfriend. Fiennes, whose character has literally lost Faith, says Nero is "trying to hang on to something that the audience will see is finished." Lewis agrees, adding that the relationship was doomed from the beginning. "Faith doesn't have the ability to be truly in love with another person, because that requires complete selflessness."

Producer Jaffe says that Faith was the most difficult role to cast, "because you have extremely limited choices when the character is defined as a singer, yet requires the skill of a seasoned actor." Yet Bigelow found the actress' first vocal performance to be "a revelation." "It was," she says, borrowing a line from the script to describe Lewis' physical stage performances, "pure and uncut."

***Strange Days*' climax *almost* explodes into the biggest damn riot you've ever seen...**

is not a movie that's designed to pacify – it's designed to be provocative, to push some buttons. So, although I was aware it was going to be a difficult scene for the audience, I also knew that, dramatically, it's the single, critical event out of which the rest of the narrative evolves – all of the characters are transformed as a result of it."

You're certainly putting the audience in an uncomfortable position, aren't you?

"Yes. What's probably most disturbing are the fragments that are filmed from the killer's point-of-view, when we see what he sees. At those moments, there's a kind of participatory relationship to the rape/murder. You're no longer simply a spectator or voyeur; you're implicated in the act. However, you're witnessing it through the eyes and senses of our hero, Lenny Nero, and it's through his reactions that you get the attitude of the film-maker, myself. His reaction is one of complete and utter disgust, repulsion and revulsion – he vomits afterwards – which contextualises the scene, and guides the audience towards the position that it should take toward the material."

* * *

BOTH HERE AND THROUGHOUT STRANGE DAYS, RALPH FIENNES' character is forced to carry most of the moral and dramatic weight of the film. When *Strange Days* was first cast, Fiennes was still a relative newcomer – at least as far as big budget Hollywood movies were concerned – but after seeing the British actor as the psychopathic Nazi commandant Amon Goeth in Spielberg's *Schindler's List*, and getting a sneak preview of his role as Charles Van Doren in Robert Redford's *Quiz Show*, Bigelow was convinced he had the ability and the intelligence to carry it off.

"I needed someone who could give me the range of emotion needed to create a hero who's flawed," she explains, "yet who you come to love because of those flaws. You realise that Lenny possesses this tremendous inner strength, and it's that which enables him to be redeemed at the end of the film."

This theme of redemption, of a flawed individual and a society that's edging towards anarchy and chaos, was one aspect of Cameron's original script that remained unaltered throughout *Strange Days'* eight-year gestation period. In fact, it's what first attracted Bigelow to the project. Like Cameron's *The Abyss*, the arc of the movie – which starts with a traditional, dystopian view of the future – is not downward, but upward. Like Lenny, Los Angeles has, by the film's end, pulled itself up out of the gutter, and has started stumbling towards an uncertain, but slightly more hopeful, future.

"The film ends with a strong insistence on hope," acknowledges Bigelow. "And it's humanity, not technology, that takes us into the next millennium. But that's not to say that when dawn comes, the social conditions we saw at the beginning of the film will suddenly reverse themselves. What the film does, and part of why I'm so proud of it, is hold a mirror up to society and show the violence, tensions, struggles and economic disparities for what they are. And if people don't like what they see reflected there, I don't think they can fault the mirror. *Strange Days* simply gives you an idea about the tools we'll need to make some very serious changes."

Strange Days will be released in the UK in March, and there'll be a full review in the March issue of SFX, on sale 27 February.

Disco 2000

THIS IS THE END, MY FRIEND, SO **DAVE HUGHES** PARTIES LIKE IT'S 1999 WITH THE MUSIC OF STRANGE DAYS...

One of the major strengths of *Strange Days* is its smart use of music – often a problem in science fiction movies, because tastes and trends change so quickly that what's hip today can soon look very dated indeed. One way around the problem is to use only timeless music – classical, or jazz – but *Strange Days* takes a more courageous route...

strange days
music from the motion picture
peter gabriel/deep forest
skunk anansie
satchel
lords of acid
juliette lewis

Music does two jobs in the film. First it's used to help establish the feel of some of the movie's major locations – like the Retinal Fetish club, where Lenny's ex-girlfriend, Faith (Juliette Lewis), belts out her PJ Harvey songs. More importantly, however, it's used to underline the film's atmosphere of change and pent-up anger, setting the scene for what is, after all, an event of global importance – the beginning of a new millennium.

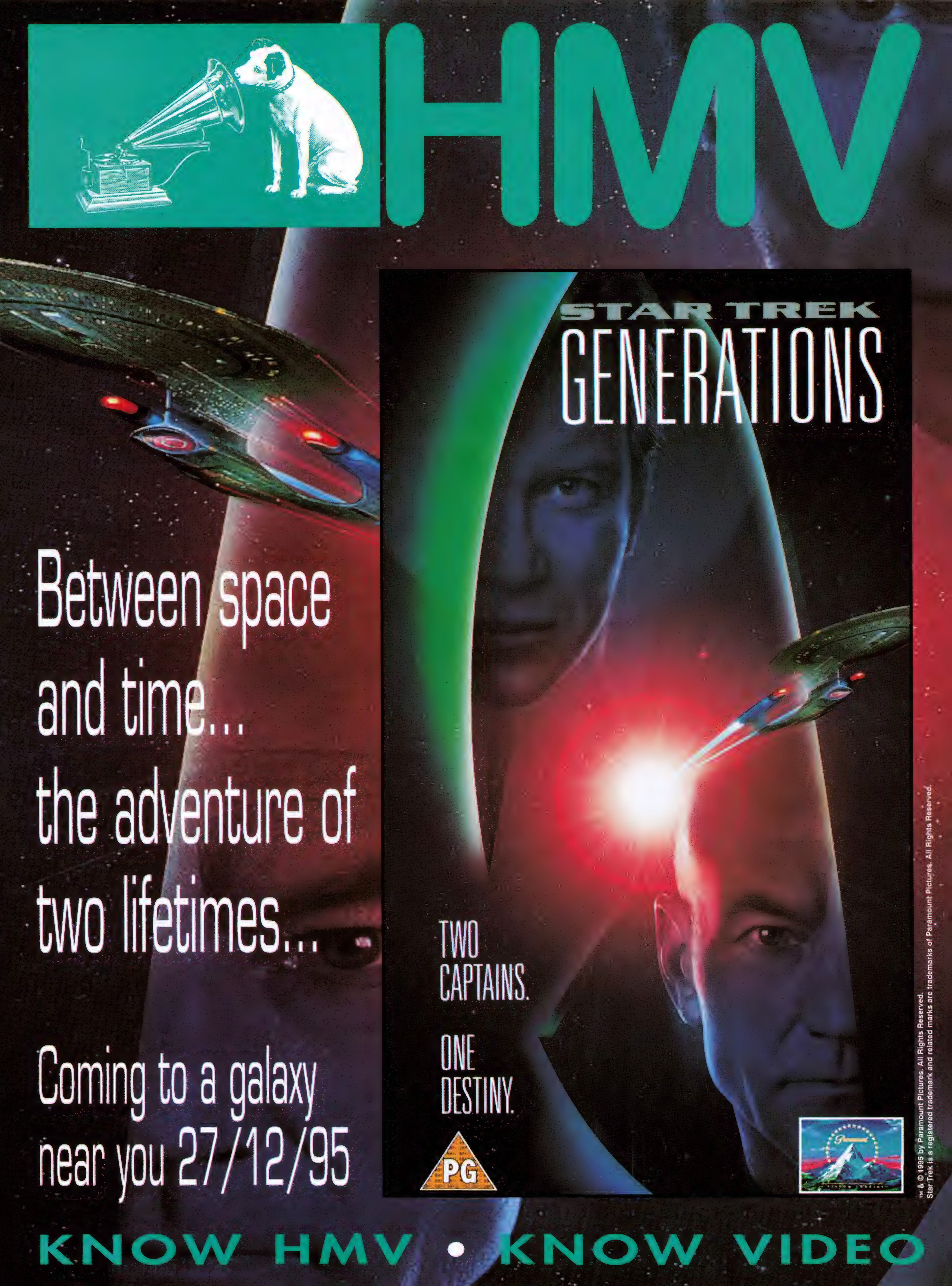
"I wanted the music to be emblematic of this global experience," explains director Kathryn Bigelow. "In four years' time, all over the world, we're all going to reach that turning point together. I wanted to constantly impress that global dimension on the audience, which is why I approached artists like Peter Gabriel, Deep Forest and PJ Harvey. What I was trying to achieve was a timelessness and a cultural homogeneity. It's not about trying to identify 1999 – it's about trying to achieve a sonic tapestry that works for both today and tomorrow."

Standout tunes on the soundtrack include "Hardly Wait," one of the two PJ Harvey-penned songs Juliette Lewis performs in the film – *Strange Days'* script promises that Faith's vocal, "becomes a scream, an inchoate wail, a police siren. The pain and rage of an entire, hell-bent tormented planet on its eve of judgement. Lost in song, Faith has found herself," and Lewis' performance delivers. Another actor, Glenn Plummer, lends his voice to the proceedings too, on ME PHI ME's rallying "hereWEcome."

"Instead of trying to anticipate what would be played in 1999," Bigelow says, "I chose what I felt was cutting-edge today, and then took it a little further." Thus the mix includes French group Deep Forest – whose memorable collaboration with Peter Gabriel plays out the century, the film and the soundtrack – as well as Belgium's Lords of Acid, British acts Tricky and Skunk Anansie, plus others. The debt owed to Jim Morrison of *The Doors* – whose song, "Strange Days," provided the film's moniker – is repaid by a grungy Prong cover version, featuring virtuoso keyboard work by *The Doors'* own Ray Manzarek.

Finally, there's *Strange Days'* main composer, Graeme Revell, who previously scored Wim Wenders' *Until the End of the World*, also set in 1999 – no coincidence, according to producer Steven Charles Jaffe: "There is something going on in Graeme's music that tells us we're not in today's world. It helps to define the future in a subtle way."

***The Strange Days* soundtrack features songs written by the likes of Leonard Cohen, PJ Harvey, Bob Marley, The Doors and the ubiquitous Tricky.**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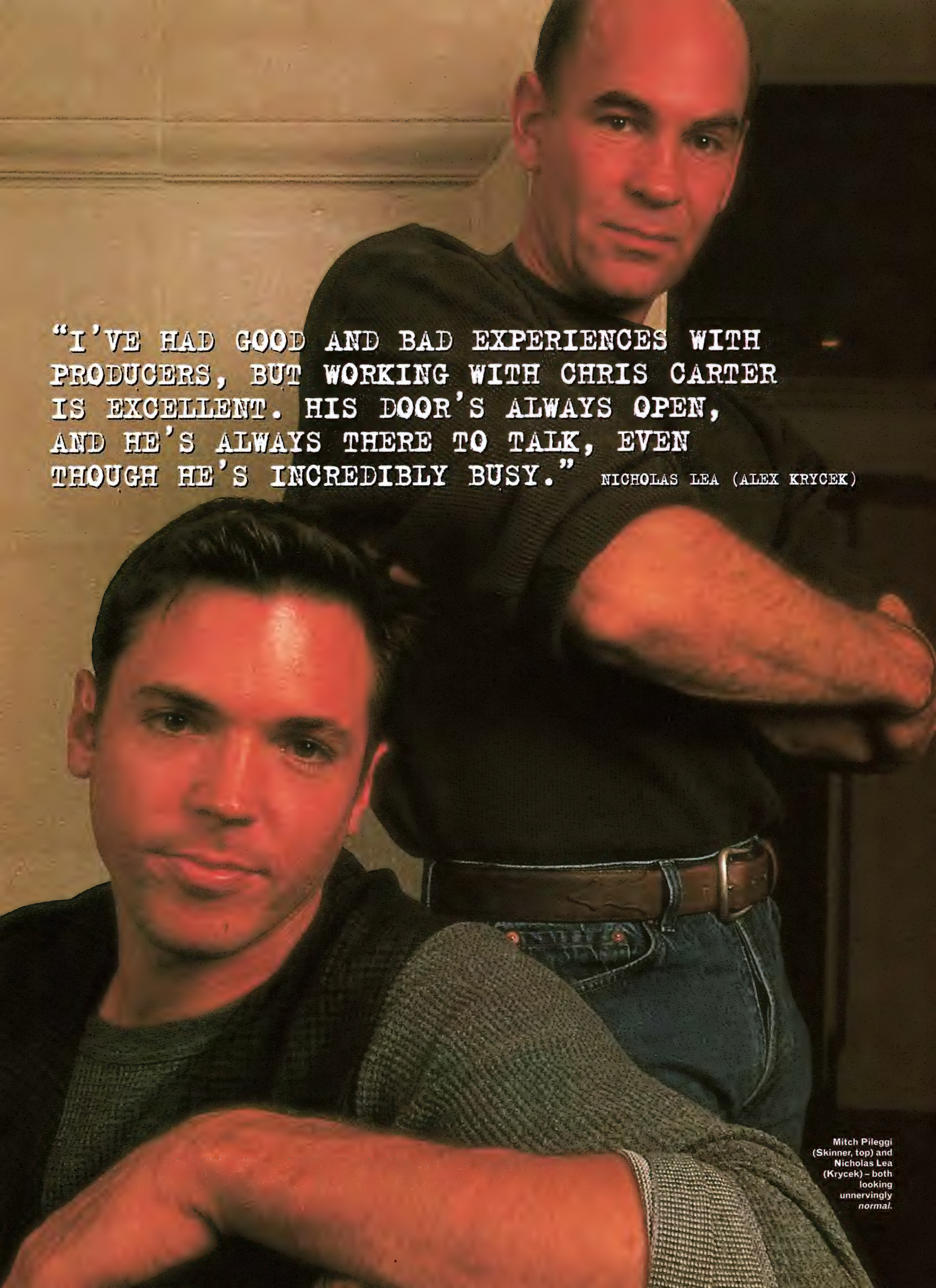


> “I’VE HAD GOOD AND BAD EXPERIENCES WITH PRODUCERS, BUT WORKING WITH CHRIS CARTER IS EXCELLENT. HIS DOOR’S ALWAYS OPEN, AND HE’S ALWAYS THERE TO TALK, EVEN THOUGH HE’S INCREDIBLY BUSY.” NICHOLAS LEA (ALEX KRYCEK)

Mitch Pileggi (Skinner, top) and Nicholas Lea (Krycek) – both looking unnervingly *normal.*

SFX Profile

THE X-FILES' OTHER AGENTS...

MEN IN BLACK

As The X-Files ploughs through a triumphant third series, confirming its position as the world's biggest cult TV show, new stars are rapidly coming to the fore – and, despite being more loosely sketched than Mulder and Scully, they're quickly grabbing the imaginations of X-Philes worldwide. Chief among them are FBI assistant director Walter Skinner, one of the few friends the beleaguered Mulder's got in the bureau, and renegade agent Alex Krycek, perhaps his greatest enemy. **Jim Swallow** met the actors who play them, Mitch Pileggi and Nicholas Lea...

If watching *The X-Files* teaches you anything, it's that it can be a pretty dangerous business taking things – or people – at face value. Confronting a smiling, friendly Krycek and Skinner, then, can be an unsettling experience. After all, didn't one of these guys – Walter Skinner, played by the heartily handshaking Mitch Pileggi – shut down the X-Files? And didn't the other – Alex Krycek, portrayed by the grinning Nicholas Lea – sell Fox Mulder down the river?

On screen these two are dark, brooding characters, with complicated motivations – you're never quite sure if either of them are on your side, working for the enemy, or playing some private little game of their own. If they're not the men in black exactly, they're certainly of the darkest grey...

* * *

Of the two actors, Pillegi is probably most familiar to X-Philes across the world, first appearing in the memorable episode "Tooms," which aired toward the end of the first season. Previously, the role of Mulder and Scully's FBI boss had shifted between a number of different actors – Charles Cioffi played Section Chief Blevins, for instance, while Frederick Coffin provided the Mulder-hating Joseph McGrath – but eventually the producers settled on Pileggi to help them provide a more permanent figure. His character, Walter Skinner, introduced an on-going "control" for Mulder – ranked above Jerry Hardin's Deep Throat, who was killed off three episodes later. Pileggi is no stranger to genre fare, having recently finished work on the Eddie Murphy vehicle *Vampire in Brooklyn,* and numbering *Shocker, Return of the Living Dead 2* and *Knight Rider 2000* in his *résumé.*

Skinner's role in *The X-Files* grew considerably during the show's second season, where we saw him develop from a gruff, unsympathetic character in "Tooms" to a complicated, intriguing individual, who might just be on the side of the angels. Pileggi – who's also appeared in *Basic Instinct, Dallas* and *Models Inc.* – is clearly comfortable developing such a multi-faceted role.

"Chris Carter and his staff do a wonderful job writing the show, so it's pretty much laid out right there," he laughs. "I just say the words, though the directors let me play Skinner pretty much how I perceive him."

When pressed to explain how he sees the character, Mitch explains that much of Skinner stems from a source very close to home. "He's based a lot on my father," he smiles, "who was once in a very similar position to Skinner. I remember when I was a kid sitting in his office, and watching how he dealt with his employees. I think I did it unconsciously, but my family have certainly pointed out that what they see on screen is a lot like dad."

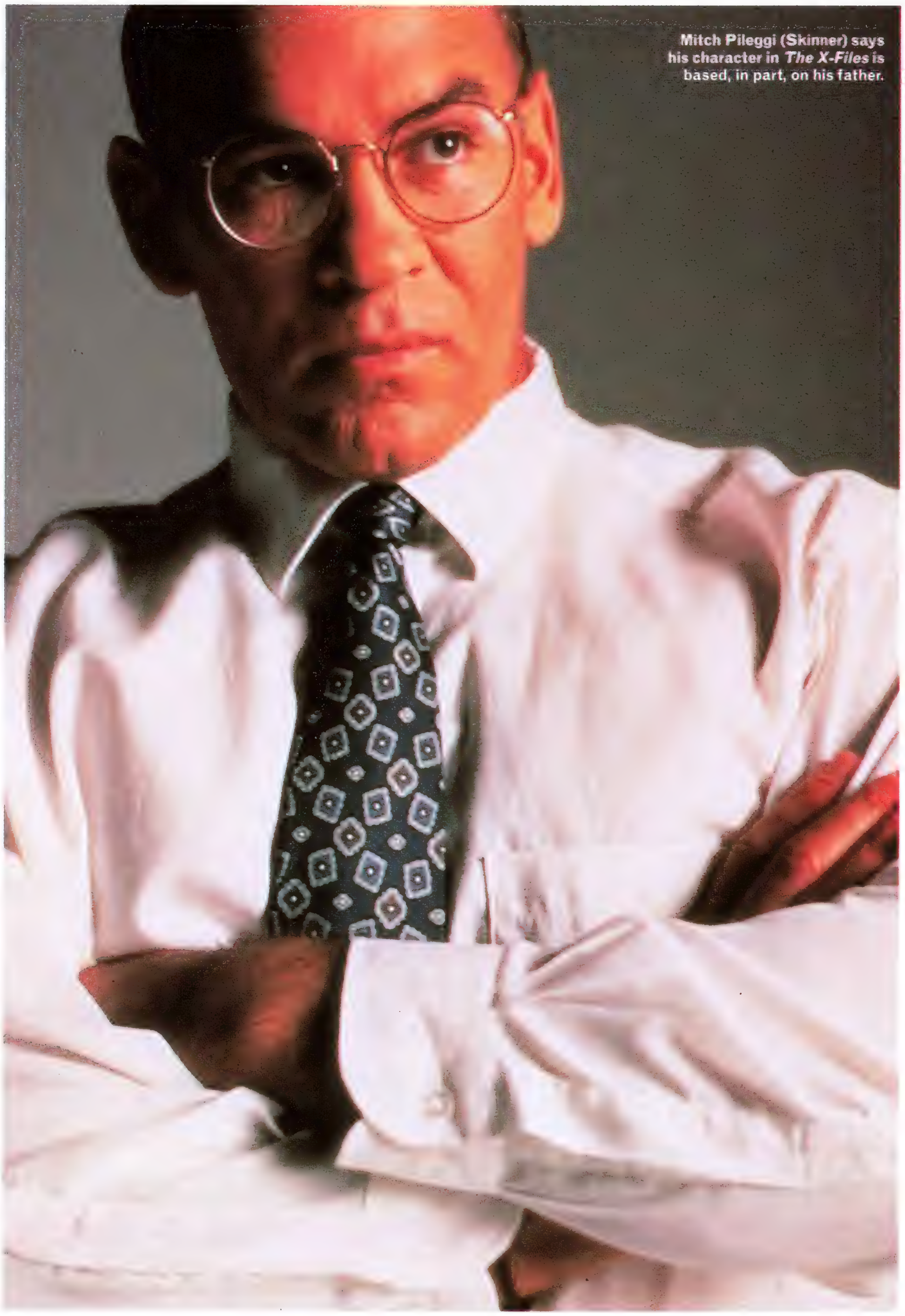
The back story for Skinner is loosely drawn, touching on his past as a marine in the Vietnam War – experiences developed during a conversation with Mulder in the episode "One Breath," where Skinner describes an out-of-body experience that occurred during his tour in Vietnam. "I always figured that he came up through the ranks, starting out in the field, doing pretty much the type of work that Mulder and Scully are doing now. He can no longer get too involved with all that, but I think he's trying to direct Mulder. He's a bit like the stern father with the disobedient son, isn't he?"

As the series and the role have grown still further from season two, Skinner has revealed more of this own motivations in some of the more pivotal *X-Files* stories. "There's going to be a lot more stuff like that happening with him," Pileggi says guardedly, referring to the opening episodes of season three, "but I don't want to spoil it; Chris Carter would shoot me!"

Part of what makes Skinner so intriguing is his unpredictability. Who would have expected

Peter J. Stone

> **"TV IS SUCH AN UNPREDICTABLE THING, AND YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING TO WORK AND WHAT WON'T. BUT IT'S GREAT THAT THE X-FILES HAS BECOME SUCH A PHENOMENON."** MITCH PILEGGI (WALTER SKINNER)



Mitch Pileggi (Skinner) says his character in *The X-Files* is based, in part, on his father.

> "I ALWAYS FIGURED THAT HE (SKINNER) CAME UP THROUGH THE RANKS, STARTING OUT IN THE FIELD, DOING PRETTY MUCH THE TYPE OF WORK THAT MULDER AND SCULLY ARE DOING NOW... HE'S A BIT LIKE THE STERN FATHER WITH THE DISOBEDIENT SON, ISN'T HE?" MITCH PILEGGI (WALTER SKINNER)

him to have a punch-up with Mr X (played by Stephen Williams) in "Colony," for instance? Or foreseen his similar confrontation with Krycek in season three?

"Chris does a lot of that with his characters," Mitch smiles. "Suddenly, something will come out of left field, and you don't anticipate it, so it's like, 'Whoa!' That's one of the things that's so attractive about Skinner – one episode will hint that he's totally behind Mulder and Scully and what they're doing, and the next time you see him he'll disagree with how they're doing things, and try to stifle them."

Of course, as *The X-Files* makes clear, Skinner is, "under pressure from above from various black ops organisations inside the government, which the Smoking Man – played by William B Davies – is part of. He's in a very tough situation on both sides, and though he wants to help out, he often can't."

* * *

NICHOLAS LEA, THE REAL LIFE FACE OF THE turncoat FBI agent Alex Krycek, clearly relishes his borderline-baddie part in the show. "It's fun playing villains," he smirks. "Or, at least, not squeaky-clean good guys. It's more interesting."

Introduced as a replacement for Scully in season two's "Sleepless," Mulder's new partner turned out to be a sleeper agent, placed by the nameless Smoking Man. He vanished after Scully's abduction in "Ascension," only to reappear on a murderous mission in season two's finale, "Anasazi." With the events of the season three openers "The Blessing Way" and "Paper Clip" now under his belt, Krycek has clearly become a fixture of *The X-Files'* world, and it's highly likely he'll be back again before the year is out.

Canadian by birth, and based in Vancouver, Lea's face has cropped up on a number of American TV shows made north of the border, including *E.N.G.*, *The Commish* and *Lonesome Dove*, and genre shows like *Highlander* and *Sliders*. He'll even sheepishly admit to a part in the dreadful *Aliens*-alike flick *Extro 2*. "It's really terrible!" he winces.

Before he found fame as Krycek, however, he appeared in a small role in *The X-Files'* first season episode, "Genderbender." "It wasn't *that* big," he laughs. "Three scenes!" Perhaps not, but obviously big enough to make an impression on director (later producer) Rob Borman, who recommended Lea for the role of Krycek.

Surprisingly, playing someone as unlikeable as Krycek doesn't bother Nicholas at all, despite the daunting Darth Vader reputation that's quickly built up around the character, particularly on the Internet. Nicknames like "Judas," "Ratboy" and "The Weasel" are flung at him constantly, but, as he says, "I love it!"

"There are more levels to the character than just that though," he grins knowingly, "which you'll see as the newer shows start to come over. I don't think that he's evil – he's just in way over his head. He's doing his job, doing what he thinks is right. You'll see, as the shows start to unfold, that he's not quite as one-sided as he appears."

Krycek's nasty intentions were made clear to Lea from the beginning, though he contributed much to the character's look and personal style himself. "There are things I did that weren't in the script," he notes, "and they were kept in. I did a lot of research on the FBI, and on double-agents, and I made a lot of personal choices about the guy's past – where he comes from, why he does what he does, and why he tries so hard to succeed."

Unlike his boss, the ubiquitous, manipulative Smoking Man, Krycek seems in many ways to represent the "Anti-Mulder" – the darker yang to Fox's yin. Lea concurs. "That's why the character is good for the show, because he gives Mulder a natural enemy – here's someone of around his own age who's more of an obvious and direct rival than the Smoking Man."

The natural antagonism between Mulder and Krycek hasn't by any means run its course, fans will be pleased to hear, and we'll definitely be seeing a lot more of it in year three.

"It gets much more exciting for my character," says Lea – and, if anything, that's a bit of an understatement. After all, his last moments in "Paper Clip" see Krycek ducking (just barely) a car bomb, then running into the wilderness clutching a stolen data file from MJ-12 UFO research group. Lea hopes to see Krycek developed further on his return, and has been discussing a story thread with actor David Duchovny, who plans to write more episode outlines for season three.

"My character is swinging back and forth between the good guys and the bad guys, and I really like that – that's how it would be in real life. I'd actually like to see Krycek save Mulder's life sometime..."

* * *

Both Pileggi and Lea are dedicated *X-Files* viewers – "I watch it every week now; I'm a big fan," says Lea – and talk of their cast-mates as if they're some kind of extended family. Lea, in particular, mentions how he and David Duchovny have inverted the Mulder/Krycek relationship, becoming fast friends in real life.

The meteoric rise of *The X-Files* caught many critics and viewers by surprise in the States, but Lea seems anything but surprised. "It's because of the integrity of the show," he says. "The guest actors are generally good, and David and Gillian do a great job. It's quality, but a bit tongue in cheek as well. I've had good and bad experiences with producers, but working with Chris is excellent. His door's always open, and he's always there to talk, even though he's incredibly busy. It directly translates to the quality of the series.

"Anyway," he concludes, "I'm always very impressed, because Chris Carter could sell *X-Files* underwear or whatever, and make a lot of money, but he doesn't. He keeps a strict lid on the whole thing."

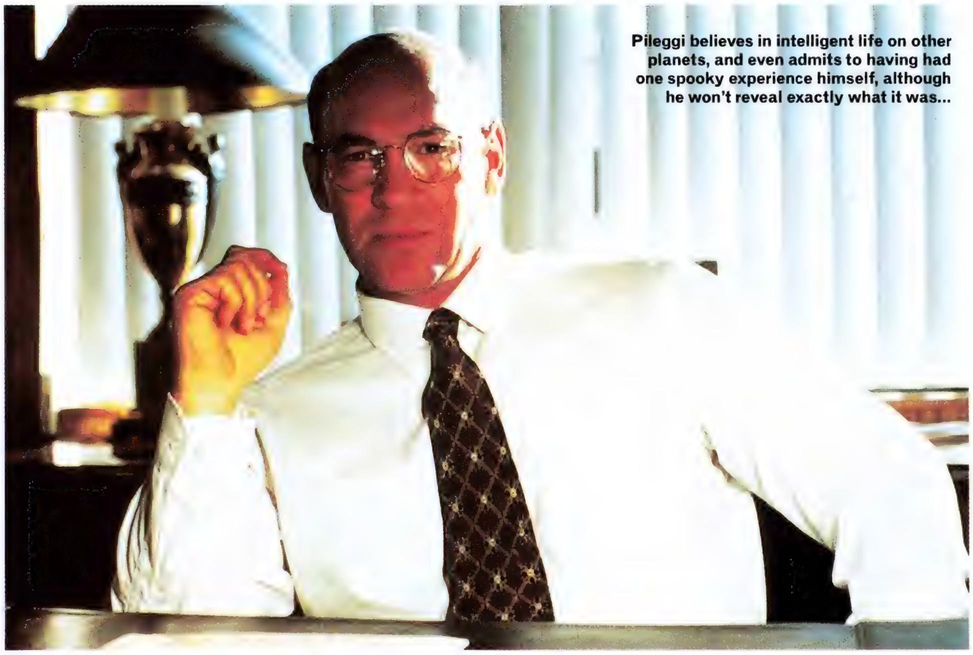
Pileggi, on the other hand, is happy to admit that the success of the show caught him unawares. "I guess you're always surprised," he shrugs. "TV is such an unpredictable thing, and you don't know what's going to work and what won't. But it's great that *The X-Files* has become such a phenomenon – what Chris Carter's doing with it is just amazing. His ideas about where he wants to go are very clear, though sometimes we don't find out what they are until we get the scripts to read through. It's a pleasure to work with somebody who's as dedicated and hard-working as he is. He's involved in every facet of the show, from production to conventions to marketing to publicity. Everything goes through him – he's got a lot on his plate, and it's amazing he handles it as well as he does."

* * *

So what's the appeal of the show? For Lea it's firmly based on, "the huge appetite people have for supernatural stories. People are fascinated by that sort of thing. And me, I was a big fan of TV shows like *The Twilight Zone* when I was a kid."

Pileggi tells me how he's been a genre reader for some time, quoting Kurt Vonnegut and Robert Heinlein as favourite authors, while both actors agree that the current spate of *X-Files* copycat shows, particularly some of the anthologies, aren't up to much. "A lot of shows are trying to copy what *The X-Files* is doing, but I don't think anyone else will be able to do it like Chris Carter does," says Pileggi.

> **"I BELIEVE IN GHOSTS, THOUGH WEREWOLVES AND GENETIC MUTANTS MIGHT BE STRETCHING THE POINT."**
>
> **NICHOLAS LEA (ALEX KRYCEK)**



Pileggi believes in intelligent life on other planets, and even admits to having had one spooky experience himself, although he won't reveal exactly what it was...

We talk about conventions too, both men having recently had their baptism in the world of fandom after stints on the US Creation Con circuit, and a trip to the UK for the Cult TV convention. "I'm amazed by the amount of information people can get their hands on," says Lea, describing how an innovative fan saved the day when he had no photos to autograph by printing off a grabbed frame from one of his old movies, hastily rented for the occasion. "They're very well educated about the people on the show."

We get to individual stand-out episodes too, with Mitch picking director David Nutter's first foray, the *Thing*-inspired "Ice." "I liked 'Ice' because it was all shot on one location," he explains, "and very claustrophobic. The performances were amazing, and the way it was shot was wonderful."

And then, inevitably, we get to the most-asked question of all for *X-Files* actors. So, the unexplained, UFOs, and the like. Do Mitch and Nicholas think it's all hokum, or what?

"Specifically?" asks Lea. "Well, I believe in ghosts, though werewolves and genetic mutants might be stretching the point."

Pileggi admits that, like Gillian Anderson, he's had one unexplained experience. "It was pretty spooky," he hints, "but I've never had any exposure to UFOs or the like. That said, I do believe there are intelligent life forms out there – I'm one of the few people on this show who does! Gillian does, but David and Chris don't! I reckon it would be arrogant to think otherwise. In fact, maybe there's intelligent life out there that's more on the ball than we are..."

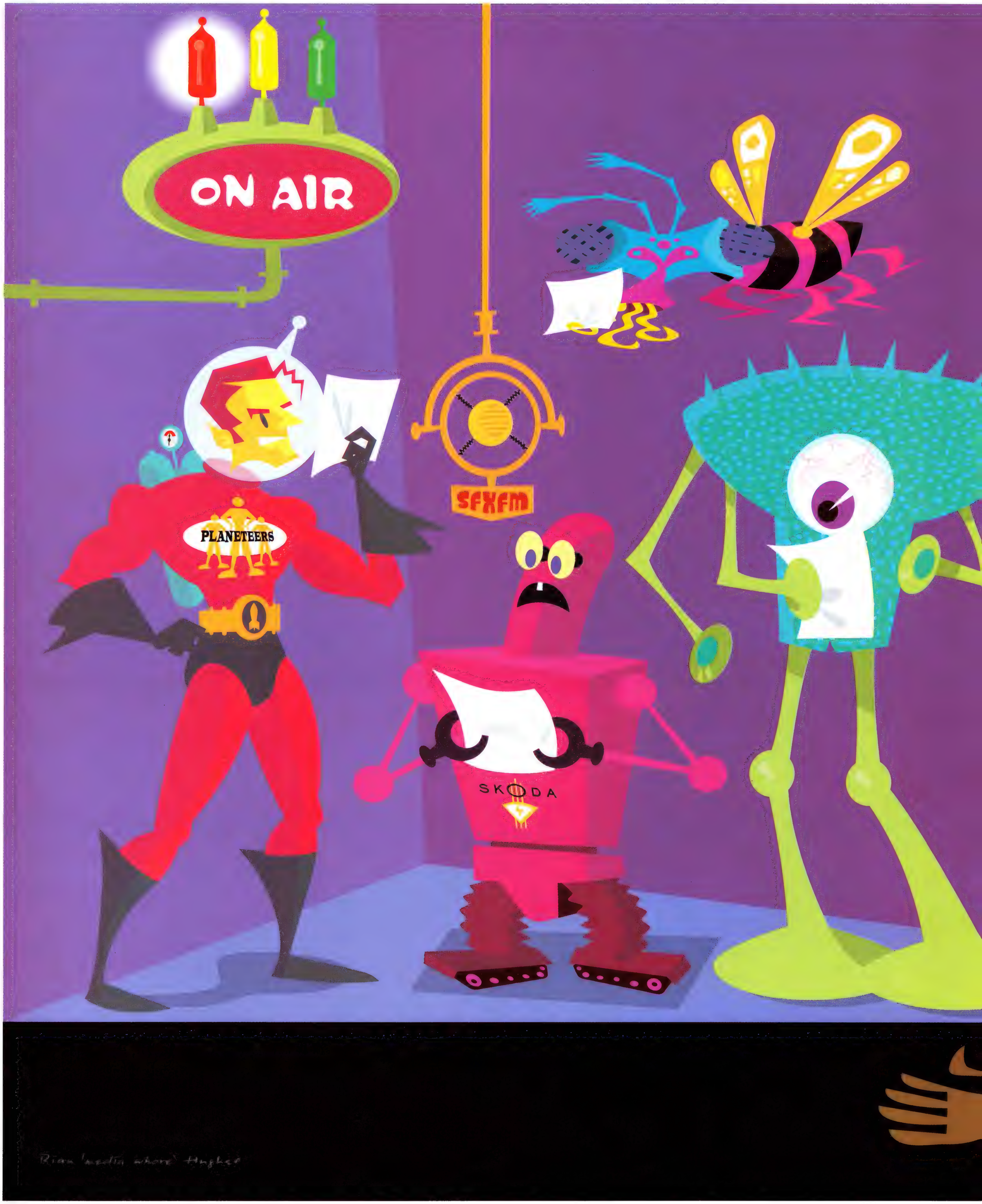
And maybe, as Mulder might continue, they're already here...

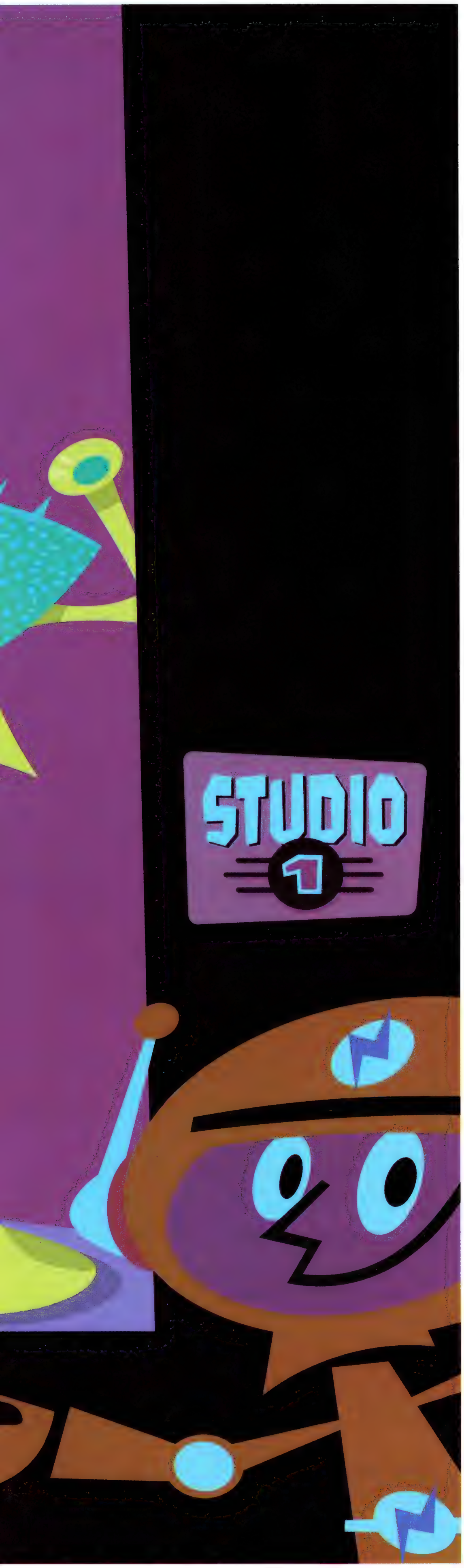
* * *

At the start of our chat Pileggi had said he couldn't tell me anything about upcoming shows in case Chris Carter killed him, but now we've been talking I wonder if he's prepared to relent at all. With a grin he drops a few hints about more recent third season stories, the most "can't wait" moment – especially for fans who enjoy Chris Carter's trademarked snappy dialogue – promising to be a confrontation between Skinner and the Smoking Man, where the former demands, "Pucker up and kiss my ass, you son of a bitch!"

I, for one, can't wait...

Season two of The X-Files *is currently running on BBC2 (Mondays, 9pm), while the third season should be broadcast on Sky One sometime in the Spring.*


ON AIR
SFXFM
PLANETEERS
SKODA
Rian 'media whore' Hughes



Fantastic Radio
AN SFX CELEBRATION

Ryan Hughes

TURN ON, TUNE IN SPACED OUT

ALTHOUGH MUCH HAS BEEN WRITTEN ABOUT GENRE TV, FILMS AND BOOKS, WE HERE AT SFX ARE PAINFULLY AWARE THAT ALTERNATIVE WAYS TO PRESENT SF STILL AREN'T GETTING THE ATTENTION THEY DESERVE. CHIEF AMONG THESE, PERHAPS, IS RADIO. TO CELEBRATE THIS STIMULATING ART FORM, THEN, HERE'S **MJ SIMPSON** WITH SFX'S GUIDE TO THE BEST SF RADIO OF THE PAST 60 YEARS...

There's always been plenty written about science fiction in literature, films and television, but another medium, perhaps uniquely suited to depictions of the fantastic, tends to get overlooked. We are, of course, talking about radio. Here at SFX, then, we felt it was high time we celebrated the little black box that brought us such all-time greats as *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, Orson Welles' *The War of the Worlds* and, erm, Kenny Everett's cult series *Captain Kremmen*. To that end, I've spent much of the last month sat in the corner with a pair of earphones on, surrounded by a sea of tapes...

Science fiction has a long and distinguished pedigree on the radio. Possibly because there's been relatively so little of it, but mainly because it doesn't have to pander to a mass audience in quite the same way as TV and film, the medium has regularly turned out genre material of a very high standard. It has one big advantage, of course – the audience's imagination has to do much of the work, thus enabling producers to take a stab at the most ambitious of storylines without having to spend much money at all. In fact, radio has been called "the theatre of

Richard Turner & William Osborne
1998
William Osborne & Richard Turner
Nineteen Ninety-Four
A bitingly funny satire of our near future
Based on the highly popular radio series

Journey into Space
The Red Planet
The Legendary Series

the imagination," and, as SF is meant to be the "fiction of the imagination," the two seem perfectly matched...

To prove just how perfectly matched they can be, here's the SFX guide to the most important science fiction and fantasy radio of the past 60 years, in rough chronological order...

BUCK ROGERS IN THE 25TH CENTURY

Long before Glen A Larson got his hands on the property – before, even, the 1939 Buster Crabbe serial – Buck blasted his way through the US airwaves in this celebrated radio show. The character, originally created in 1928 by Philip F Nowlan for a novella in *Amazing Stories* magazine, made his first appeared in comic strip form in 1929, and began his life on the radio three years later. The series eventually lasted until 1947.

Creators for Buck's broadcast incarnation included writer Dick Calkins, who also illustrated – and occasionally wrote – the comic strip. Buck was initially played by Matt Crowley, who at one time played the title roles in the radio versions of *Dick Tracy* and *Jungle Jim,* and occasionally guested as Batman in the original *Superman* radio serial.

THE WAR OF THE WORLDS

Harry Harrison is actually old enough to remember the legendary 1938 broadcast of *The War of the Worlds* by Orson Welles' Mercury Theatre on the Air – and even though he was only a six years old at the time, he wasn't fooled in the least.

A lot of misinformed crap has been written about Welles' broadcast (from a script by Howard Koch) over the years. Yes, it did cause a degree of consternation, but in a country the size of America, over-reaction by some listeners is perhaps unavoidable. However, Harry Harrison recalls no mass exodus of townsfolk, and seems certain the reaction has been exaggerated as the story's been retold through the decades.

Although "the original 1938 broadcast" of *The War of the Worlds* has been issued on LP and cassette numerous times, and broadcast on Radio 5, the recording in question is not, in fact, the original (live) broadcast. It's a re-recording with all the original actors, made shortly afterwards, when it became apparent that there was a demand to hear the programme again.

This was a standard technique at the time, because recordings were made on disc, not tape, and thus had to have a very specific running time. Disc-recording also meant that shows could not be edited (which *The War of the Worlds* is). None of the story is missing, of course, but the original broadcast did sport something the recording had no need for: Ads.

Yes, those Americans who were fooled by Welles' broadcast (and, remember, it was intended as *avant-garde* drama, not as a hoax), believed that reports of an alien invasion were being interrupted every ten minutes for adverts. (Although, knowing how American broadcasting works, it's fair to say that should we ever suffer a real invasion, they probably *would* have commercials during the news reports...)

DAN DARE

...Or, to give it its full title, *The Adventures of Dan Dare, Pilot of the Future.* Based on the Eagle comic strip, this was the first daily serial on Radio Luxembourg after the Second World War, starting in July 1951 and running for five years. The actor who took the title role was not credited, but, as he sounded exactly like the BBC's Dick Barton, most listeners realised it was indeed Noel Johnson playing the part.

In the radio version of *Star Wars,* it didn't matter one jot that Luke Skywalker was "kind of short for a stormtrooper."

A new version of *Dan Dare,* adapted directly from the original comics, was broadcast on Radio 4 in 1990.

JOURNEY INTO SPACE

The best – and most fondly remembered – British SF radio serial. Written and produced by Charles Chilton, previously responsible for *Western Riders of the Range,* the opening episode was first broadcast in September 1953. It starred Andrew Faulds as Jet Morgan, pilot of the spaceship Luna, which blasted off for the Moon in the far-flung future (i.e. 1965!). Luna was a British project, launching from Australia (anyone remember Blue Streak?) and had a crew of four. After successfully touching down on and exploring the Moon, the crew of Luna were mystified to find their food, water, fuel and oxygen supplies suddenly – and inexplicably – depleted. The Doc's diary provided the flashback framework to explain what had happened, including a visit to an alien planet.

The first series was entitled "Operation Luna" and two other series followed – "The Red Planet" and "The World In Peril" – with some cast changes. "The Red Planet," once thought lost, was rediscovered in the BBC archives in the late '80s. Chilton was a keen astronomer, and one of the reasons *Journey into Space* is so fondly remembered (see last issue's SFXcellent! for proof) was because of its scientific accuracy.

A one-off play based on *JIS,* subtitled *The Return from Mars,* was broadcast in 1981. An '80s series by Chilton, *Space Force,* failed to take off.

DIMENSION X & X MINUS ONE

One of the first ever radio shows recorded on magnetic tape was *X Minus One,* a 1955-56 revival of a legendary 1950-51 anthology series, *Dimension X.* Both series were notable for adapting classic SF short stories from magazines like *Asimov's* and *Astounding,* and are generally held to have produced some of the finest radio SF ever.

Among the famous stories adapted were "Requiem" and "The Roads Must Roll" (Heinlein), "C-Chute" and "Nightfall" (Asimov), "The Cold Equations" (Tom Godwin), "The Tunnel Under the World" (Frederick Pohl), "The Green Hills of Earth", and "The Old Die Rich" (HL Gold). Actors who appeared in the series included Jack Lemmon, Everett Sloane and Art Carney.

Tape-recording was still an unknown quantity to many people in 1955, radio engineers included. Legend tells that the engineer who recorded the fourth edition of *X Minus One* (the short story "Mars is Heaven") was so unused to the medium that he accidentally wiped the whole recording. The actors were brought in again to re-record the show, only to have the engineer wipe it again! On the third recording, a different engineer was used. The actors didn't mind doing all the takes, though, because they received three fees for their trouble!

THE HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY

Probably the most famous piece of radio SF, if only because of the tremendous number of

BBC RADIO
HITCH-
GUIDE
GA
By Doug
THE SECON
BBC RADIO
HITCH
GUID
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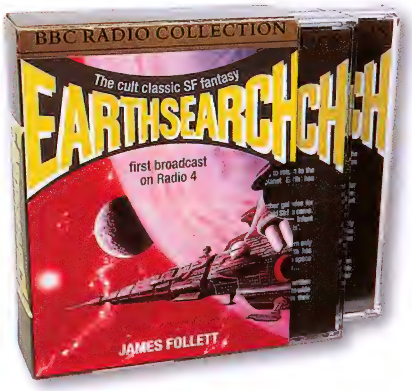
By Dou
THE PRI
BBC RADIO
THE A
SUP
DOOMSDAY
THE
SU
BAT
KNIGH
A KNIGHT'S FALL • A HERO
THE AMAZING
SPIDER-MAN
With theme music by Brian May



media into which it has been adapted. Douglas Adams was a struggling scriptwriter, making occasional contributions to sketch shows, when producer Simon Brett encouraged him to come up with his own series. A pilot for *Hitchhiker's* was recorded in the Summer of 1977, and when it was broadcast in March 1978, the *Star Wars* phenomenon was at its height, which only helped matters.

In all, there were 12 half-hour episodes, many aspects of which will be unfamiliar to fans who only know the TV series and books. For example, the Hagunemmon – a super-evolutionary species which is liable to evolve several times during a single meal – only occurs in the radio series and occasional stage versions. The planet Brontitall – where society collapsed when the number of shoe shops passed the "Shoe Event Horizon," and which is now ruled by the Dolmansaxlil Shoe Corporation – was covered in three pages in print, but took up several episodes on radio.

Simon Brett remembers: "I never knew a writer with as clear a vision of what he wanted as Douglas. Right down to the theme tune." (An Eagles track, called "Journey of the Sorcerer," was picked for its prominent banjo.) The *Hitchhiker* LPs issued shortly after had a different cast and storyline, but the whole radio series is currently available from BBC tapes and CDs. In fact, the series has been so successful that a third series – an eight-part adaptation of *Life, the Universe and Everything* – was planned for broadcast and recording. Alick Rowe prepared a script, in consultation with producer Dirk Maggs, but Adams wasn't happy and the project ground to a halt.

However, radio series based on both *Life...* and the fourth book, *So Long and Thanks for All the Fish,* have been recorded and broadcast – in Germany and Finland!

FOUNDATION

Isaac Asimov's epic saga (well, the original three books of it, anyway) was adapted into eight one-hour episodes for radio, and broadcast in 1977. The vast timespan covered by the story meant there was no regular cast. BBC Radio Collection released the series on cassette, but have since deleted it.

A radio play based on *The Caves of Steel* was broadcast in 1992, after Asimov's death.

STAR WARS

A 13-part serial based on the film was broadcast on US National Public Radio, and BBC Radio 4, in 1981. Mark Hamill (Luke) and Anthony Daniels (C-3PO) were the only members of the original cast to appear in this version. Among the supporting actors was Jerry Hardin – *The X-Files'* Deep Throat.

Brian Daley was given the task of scripting the series on the strength of his trilogy of *Star Wars* spin-off novels about Han Solo. Expanding the original film's 121 minutes (of which only about 27 consisted of dialogue) into six and a half hours allowed for much more exploration of character, and the inclusion of many sequences only hinted at on the big screen.

The Empire Strikes Back followed shortly afterwards (the same team were involved), but worldwide sales were lower (the BBC did not pick it up, for example), and so plans to adapt *Return of the Jedi* were dropped. Both series have been issued on tape and in script form (currently available from Titan Books).

Jon Pertwee testing out the new BBC personal recording studio: "Can you alter the sound levels? I'm a bit toppy."

HARRY HARRISON

Three of Harry Harrison's novels were broadcast on British radio in the '80s: Episodic readings (by Kerry Shale) of *Star-Smashers of the Galaxy Rangers* and *Bill, the Galactic Hero,* plus a full-length play based on *The Technicolour Time Machine.* Harry was very pleased with these adaptations, as were most of his fans. However one listener, presumably unaware that *Star-Smashers* is a parody of EE "Doc" Smith-style space opera, wrote to the *Radio Times* complaining that it was dreadful, sexist rubbish! None of these broadcasts have been repeated, although *Bill* has been issued on LP and cassette.

The Technicolour Time Machine was one of an occasional series of SF plays broadcast on Radio 4 throughout 1981, including Arthur C Clarke's *A Fall of Moondust,* HG Wells' *The First Men in the Moon* and John Wyndham's *The Chrysalids.*

EARTHSEARCH

This highly acclaimed ten-part Radio 4 drama from 1981 was set on board the Starship Challenger. Sharna, Astra, Darv and Commander Telson were the only survivors from a crew of hundreds, raised since childhood by the ship's two computers, Angel One and Angel Two. A search for their home planet – long since vanished as the result of some form of time dilation effect – produced some of the most intelligent media SF ever written.

A second series, imaginatively titled *Earthsearch 2,* followed, and both were novelised by the scriptwriter James Follett.

RAY BRADBURY

The only SF author to be honoured with an anthology series devoted exclusively to his work is Ray Bradbury. *Bradbury 13* was produced by a group of students at Brigham Young University, USA, and broadcast on US public radio in 1984. Among the 13 stories adapted for the radio were "The Happiness Machine," "Dark They Were and Golden Eyed" and "The Veldt." This last story (written in 1950) was also adapted for both *Dimension X* and *X Minus One.*

The BBC have often adapted Bradbury stories into radio plays: "Leviathan '99" in 1968, "There Will Come Soft Rains" in 1977 (also on *X Minus One*), *Fahrenheit 451* in 1982 and *Kaleidoscope* in 1989. All are miles better than the TV version of *The Martian Chronicles.*

A new series of Bradbury adaptations, introduced by the man himself, is currently running on Radio 4 under the title *Tales of the Bizarre.* See the mini-feature in this issue's Strange Tales for more details, starting on page 4.

DOCTOR WHO

The Doctor's first outing on radio was *Slipback,* a three-part story first broadcast in 1985. This was one small part of a "youth radio" experiment called *Pirate Radio 4* – a very hit and miss affair that many people were unable or unwilling to sit through. It wasn't a tragedy, though, because when the BBC released it on cassette some time later most listeners didn't think it was very good anyway.

The Doctor returned to radio in 1993 with *The Paradise of Death,* a five-part adventure which went out on Radio 5. Sadly, Radio 5 is an AM station, so the broadcasts were of poor quality and in mono. Fans were therefore

pleased to hear of a stereo repeat on Radio 2, and primed their tape recorders in readiness. All was going swimmingly until episode five, when some klutz at the Beeb decided it'd be a good idea to repeat part four again! To date, the final episode has never been broadcast in stereo, although it has been issued on cassette.

A second Jon Pertwee adventure, *The Ghosts of N-Space,* was recorded many months ago, but currently lies gathering dust in a BBC cupboard somewhere. There are no plans to broadcast it yet. Nobody knows why...

DAVE HOLLINS, SPACE CADET

A recurring sketch in season two of award-winning late '80s comedy show *Son of Cliché,* written by *Red Dwarf* creators Rob Grant and Doug Naylor.

Dave Hollins (Chris Barrie) was the last surviving human being, drifting through space, accompanied by his computer HAB (Nick Wilton). Among the life-forms they encountered were a sentient biro and a small moon which turned out to be a really fat man! Many of the jokes from *Dave Hollins, Space Cadet* were reused in the early episodes of *Red Dwarf.*

Given that *Son of Cliché* received enormous (for radio, at least) critical and popular acclaim, and led directly to the most popular British SF series of the '90s, it's a mystery why nothing has been issued on tape.

TERRY PRATCHETT

Apart from two 1988 *Woman's Hour* readings, the first Pratchett dramatisation was a six-episode version of *Guards! Guards!* on Radio 5 in 1991, with Martin Jarvis as the narrator. A much better four-part adaptation of *Wyrd Sisters* turned up on Radio 4 last July, courtesy of producer Claire Grove.

A big Pratchett fan, Claire explained her choice of novel to SFX: "The Radio 4 audience won't necessarily know Pratchett, but *Wyrd Sisters* has something they can latch on to, because it's a comic retelling of the *Macbeth* story. If I did another one, I'd like to do *Maskerade.* If the audience don't know Pratchett, it's a comic version of *The Phantom of the Opera.* Also, it follows on from *Wyrd Sisters.*"

Claire was keen to point out that she and scriptwriter Vince Foxall were dramatising the book, and thus deliberately not using a narrator. There is, however, some debate over this point: Claire says that Terry told them *not* to use a narrator, while Terry maintains that a narrator was precisely what the production needed. Nevertheless, this production used the strength of radio as a medium, incorporating sound effects, music and voices brilliantly. "We read and re-read the book," said Claire. "The most difficult part of adapting it into four episodes was working out which bits to leave out."

GREAT PAN
THE RED PLANET
Charles Chilton
The famous B.B.C. space thriller with Jet Morgan and his crew
2'6
PAN Books
JOURNEY INTO SPACE
THE STORY OF THE RECORD BREAKING RADIO SERIAL
Charles Chilton
2/-

FRANKENSTEIN

Claire Grove, producer of the Terry Pratchett radio plays, also directed a two-part dramatisation of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* which was broadcast in 1994 to cash in on the Kenneth Branagh film version.

"I love dealing with the fantastic on radio," she told SFX. "With *Frankenstein,* one of the trickiest parts was the role of the 'Creature,' especially before he learnt to speak. In the book, it says he has no lips, so it was a real challenge for the actor. He treated the lines as if he had learnt a new language, so he occasionally put emphasis on an inappropriate word or stressed the wrong syllable."

A similarly opportune version of the story was transmitted in America in 1932 to promote the Karloff film. The book was dramatised into 13 half-hour episodes by Bret Morrison, who also starred. At the time, Morrison was still in high school, and only got the *Frankenstein* job because – hurrah for nepotism! – his aunt worked for Universal Studios.

13 years later, he took over the title role of *The Shadow* for the last nine years of the original radio show.

RADIO STARS

MORE GREAT SHOWS YOU MAY HAVE MISSED...

Our choice cuts of radio SF broadcast over the past 60 years have, of course, only scraped the surface of all the genre material that's been aired; to round things off, then, here are a few of the other great programmes you might have missed...

ON AIR
STUDIO

Captain Kremmen

Arguably Kenny Everett's greatest creation, Kremmen was a Space Age superhero whose universe-saving escapades were first broadcast on London's Capital Radio in the late '70s, where Everett was a DJ. His animated adventures later appeared in LWT's *The Kenny Everett Video Show,* and spun off into a short film and assorted records.

Chickenman

It's on our local radio station (GWR FM), it's funny, it's got lots of episodes of around four minutes long, and it's about a Batman-like character who chooses to model himself on a feathery farmyard creature. We think it's "over ten years old, and maybe Australian." Anyone know more?

The Goon Show

"The Scarlet Capsule" was the definitive *Quatermass* spoof – a sinister metal canister is discovered in a tube station, and turns out to be – a tube train! Milligan *et al* were also responsible for "The First Albert Memorial In Space" and "1985."

Hordes of the Things

Cult Tolkien-esque spoof by John *(Not the Nine O'Clock News)* Lloyd and Andrew *(Two Point Four Children)* Marshall. Broadcast in 1980 and never repeated, alas.

Judge Dredd

For the full low-down on the recent Radio 1FM serial and its producer Dirk Maggs (also responsible for *Superman, Batman* and *Spider-Man)* see the feature in SFX5.

Lord of the Rings

Brilliant BBC adaptation of the entire Tolkien classic, originally broadcast on Radio 4 in 1981. Ian Holm and Michael Horden were among the stars of what's now seen as the definitive adaptation. 13 hours long, it's been available on cassette from some time, and is now on a 14 CD set costing £79.95.

1994

Intelligent Orwell-ian spoof broadcast in 1984, starring Robert Lindsay and written by two ex-Footlights performers. Robert Bathurst took over the lead role in the 1986 sequel, *1998.*

Paradise Lost in Space

Reviewed in SFX1, this six-part series was written by *Have I Got News for You* producer Colin Swash, and starred Tony "Baldrick" Robinson as a political activist stranded on an alien planet with a time-share salesman. A second series is planned.

Star Terk 2

Bizarre, hit-and-miss late '80s Radio 4 sketch show, revolving around a parody of *Star Trek,* in which each week the starship Enterprise found itself inexplicably drawn into a parallel dimension – which consisted of a bizarre, hit-and-miss Radio 4 sketch show!

This has, of course, been by no means a definitive listing, so if you think we've missed out your favourite SF fantasy radio show, don't just sit there – tell us! Write to: SFX Radio Stars, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon BA1 2BW.

"...Already, it's being called the theft of the year.

One of the most important artefacts of Ebon history, the Key of Delhyread is worth well over a million credits. Its loss is a great blow to the World of Progress."

- Mike Scope,
for Channel 19,
Third Eye News

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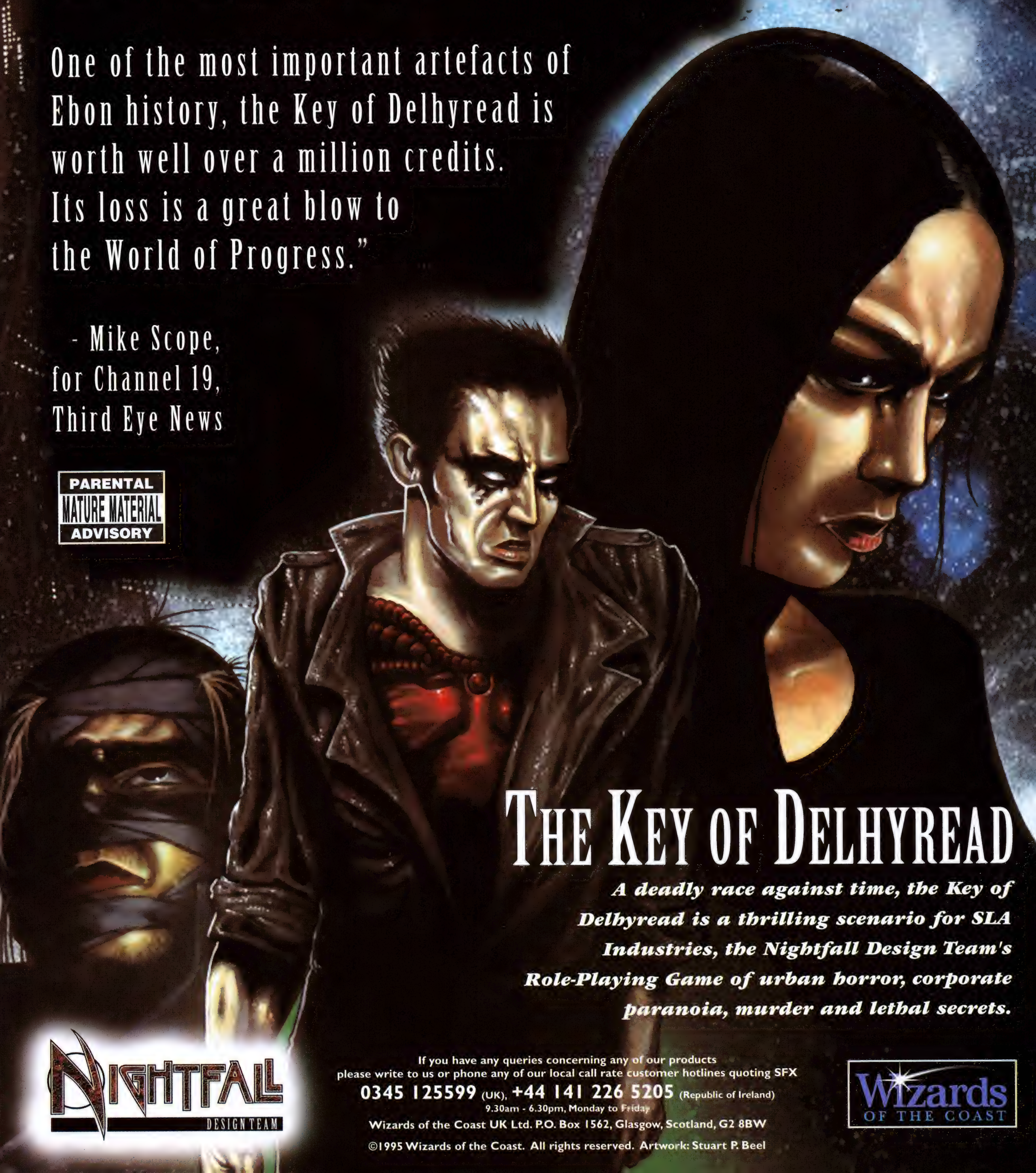

THE KEY OF DELHYREAD

A deadly race against time, the Key of Delhyread is a thrilling scenario for SLA Industries, the Nightfall Design Team's Role-Playing Game of urban horror, corporate paranoia, murder and lethal secrets.

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Wizards
OF THE COAST

TARA! TARA! TARA!

It was never going to be easy. Cathy Gale had seduced Britain; Emma Peel had sold the series to the Americans. What was there for the third Avengers girl to do? For actress Linda Thorson, straight out of drama school and completely inexperienced in television, playing the "fluffy, bubbly" Tara King was always going to be an uphill struggle. To her credit, she made it work – but then, as **Dave Golder** discovered, Tara was always more than just "the one after Mrs Peel"...

Okay, so she didn't exactly follow in the footsteps of Honor Blackman and Diana Rigg (or, indeed, Joanna Lumley) by becoming a Bond girl. Okay, so she only lasted one season. And, okay, so she was the last of the original *Avengers* girls – the one who saw the show cancelled. But while to most of Britain Linda Thorson may well be just "the one who came after Emma Peel," you're putting your life in your hands if you ever suggest she's the forgotten Avenger...

"I did 33 episodes, all in colour, which is more colour than Diana did!" Thorson insists. "And Patrick Macnee admits that mine are some of the best ever episodes. I think I made my mark as Tara King as well as anyone else could have done."

I'm speaking to Linda Thorson fresh from the Cult TV weekend, where *The Avengers* won a Hall of Fame award – "No little prizes for me, though," she sighs. "*The X-Files* got everything" – and where it's once again been impressed upon her that a lot of people *do* remember her character, after all. "I think it's a miracle that one's well-known for something one did 25 years ago," she smiles.

But surely she must admit that, to the British public at least, she's still very much in the shadow of Blackman and Rigg?

"One has to remember that after the series finished I went back to America," explains the Canadian-born Thorson. "My mother was dying, and I had to go back to be with her, even though it was like starting all over again. Since then, I've done five Broadway shows, had my own series, and starred in a soap for two and half years. I've constantly worked, and when I do come back, and especially when I go to Paris – the Tara shows were *the* episodes for the French – I find people still love Tara King."

Your mission, should you choose to accept it, is to try and beat Cathy Gale and Emma Peel at their own game.

Any ideas why?

"I think the series was at its peak at the time. Of all of the episodes, I think mine look the least dated today, and that's including *The New Avengers*. You can see it in the sets, and the atmosphere, and the whole way of speaking – it's very '60s, but very focused."

Rewatching the shows today you can see what she means...

* * *

The reason Linda Thorson's doing the publicity rounds is simple: Lumiere has just released a boxed set of six Tara King *Avengers* episodes, and judging by the way she manages to mention this fact at every opportunity, she's flattered. And she's every right to be. After all, as Thorson points out, they're good TV – and good *Avengers*. Yes, the shows are a little more bizarre than their Cathy Gale/Emma Peel predecessors, a little softer, and a little more self-consciously hip. But they're still *The Avengers*, and a natural step up from the Emma Peel episodes in the same way Emma Peel was a step up from Cathy Gale. In other words, they're rattlingly good, highly imaginative slices of '60s spy-camp which, with the benefit of hindsight, leave US series like *Mission Impossible* and *The Man From UNCLE* looking limp and half-baked.

Craig Stennett

This being the case, then, how come the Tara King season has always been regarded as the weakest of the series? The reasons are manifold, as Thorson is keen to point out, and owe no small amount to the fact that her season was the one that bombed in the US...

"But that had nothing to with the quality of the episodes," she insists. "The show was put up against *Rowan and Martin's Laugh In* – the network considered we were their best weapon to use against it, which was unfortunate. You see, *Laugh In* had become the biggest show in America overnight – so that was it – *the end*. I'm sure we'd have gone on to do another season if it hadn't been for that..."

* * *

There were other problems... By the time Thorson had joined, mainstay creative forces Brian Clemens and Albert Fennell had been ousted by ABC, and former script editor

John Bryce made producer. He'd intended giving the series a more realistic edge, and was partly responsible for casting Thorson, along with ABC casting director Robert Lennard and Dan Boyle, head of the company in America. When it became clear that Bryce wasn't going to be able to bring the series in on time for the proposed US airdates, however, Fennell and Clemens were brought back on board – and on arrival they found many things not to their liking. Clemens, in particular, was unimpressed by the choice of lead actress. A nightmarish situation for Thorson, surely?

"It was," she remembers, "but we were filming flat-out, so I was preoccupied with all that. I had to remember how I was supposed to look, what my lines were... I just wanted to get on with it. But it did take them a while to realise that I could play the role – and that I *wasn't* going to be like Diana."

In fact, Bryce had been so worried that Thorson was going to end up a Rigg lookalike, he made her have a complete makeover – her hair was dyed blonde, and she was sent to a health farm to lose pounds...

"They chose me from 200 actresses, 199 of whom looked completely different to me – 50 were blond, and 100 were thinner!" she laughs. "And then proceeded to change everything about me! I was intimidated by that – especially when the dye made my hair fall out, so I had to wear wigs and things for a few episodes!"

A bald Tara? Now that really would have been different...

"It would have solved the whole thing," laughs Thorson. "I'd have been a forerunner of Sinead O'Connor. Actually, it could have been quite good, and I'd have got there earlier in the morning. No hairdresser problems!"

Bryce's vision of Tara had always been to get as far away from the tough, cool Mrs Peel image as possible. Tara was going to be a "girlie, blonde, pink kind of thing" as Thorson puts it, but that all changed when Clemens came back on board.

"She returned to being more the kind of character who's able to protect herself," agrees Thorson. "Doing judo and karate, as opposed to the brick-in-the-handbag thing. We got back to her being an equal, having a sense of humour, and letting me be more myself, rather than imposing this kind of Marilyn Monroe character on me."

How did the sexual chemistry between you and Steed work out, I wonder? You were a lot younger than him, and he seemed to want to protect you in the show, but at the same time you were actually the first unmarried partner he'd had...

"At first, I think Patrick thought he was too old for me, or I was too young for him," she remembers, "but then he saw that it really worked, because it made him appear younger and more sexually involved. I decided that Tara was in love with Steed, and introduced the whole thing of her looking up to him, which made Patrick become very protective. It brought out a new side to Steed. I mean, I'd been chosen for the role – and that must have had something to do with me being me, so why not let me bring more of myself to the proceedings?"

Indeed. Though to be fair, for an actress fresh out of drama school you actually seem to have been given a surprising amount of control over your character...

"Certainly John Bryce was enthusiastic about my input, and Brian Clemens and I did work it out after a while. But, yeah, I was outspoken. I didn't want to be shoved around and told what to do, because it was me out there on the screen, after all!"

Thorson also believes that, as well as bringing out new facets of Steed's character, she had an effect on Patrick Macnee himself.

"I think he felt, 'Oh gosh... I'd better get myself looking good if she's going to be portrayed as being in love with me!'" she laughs. "He had to have all his suits taken in, because he'd lost tons of weight."

You got on, I take it?

"Definitely. He's such an amusing person. A great *raconteur,* and always supportive. Even though he may have thought at the beginning that I was too young, or didn't have enough experience, he never made me feel that way."

Indeed, the pair got on so well that ad-libbing the tag sequences – the final scenes in each episode – with Macnee soon became one of Thorson's favourite parts of the show.

"It was so great to just be relaxed, and react to something Patrick did or said. Once the camera was rolling it was pretty much fixed what we were going to do and say, but while we rehearsed it we could throw in a line here and a line there."

Fur-rimmed fashions reach their apotheosis with the fourth (yes, fourth) *Avenger* girl, Tara King...

> **"I think the series was at its peak at the time. Of all of the episodes, I think mine look the least dated today, and that's including *The New Avengers.*"**

* * *

ALTHOUGH POOR US RATINGS SEALED THE *Avenger's* fate, the idea was, of course, later resurrected in *The New Avengers,* starring Gareth Hunt and Joanna Lumley. Before that, though, Thorson almost got a chance to reprise Tara King in an aborted mid-'80s project called *The Avenging Angel.* She was never in the running for *The New Avengers,* however – "I was in America at the time" – and doesn't seem too worried by the fact. "Joanna was a fabulous choice," she says, "but I'm just as happy I didn't do it. I'd only want to go back and do Tara again – a Tara who's 25 years older, of course – if the script was very good. If it was rubbish I'd just pass – why mar the whole image with a tacky movie?"

So do you think they should do a big budget *Avengers* movie?

"If they do," she laughs, "I hope they make it with British people, not Sharon Stone or Mel Gibson!"

* * *

ALTHOUGH THE AVENGERS IS NOW STUCK firmly in the past, don't think Linda Thorson's completely given up on fantasy. Many SFX readers will probably remember her guest appearance in an episode of *Star Trek: TNG* – where she played a female Cardassian!

"It was an episode called 'The Chase'," she remembers. "I was in LA, doing a play in the evenings, and they asked me to come in. I was thrilled – I was going to be the first female Cardassian they'd had on the show! – but it was a really hard job. I had to be in make-up for five hours a day for ten days! It was terribly hard, sort of humiliating, and claustrophobic – you have to have lunch literally through a straw, and then it takes at least an hour to get the make up off again."

It sounds unlikely she'd take the job again. Was she never tempted to go on stage in her Cardassian make-up, I wonder? It'd certainly have been different...

"Now that *would* have been interesting," she smiles. "Almost as interesting as playing Tara King bald!"

The Tara King box set from Lumiere costs £29.99 and contains the episodes "The Interrogators," "Take Me To Your Leader," "Thingumajig," "Requiem" and "Pandora."

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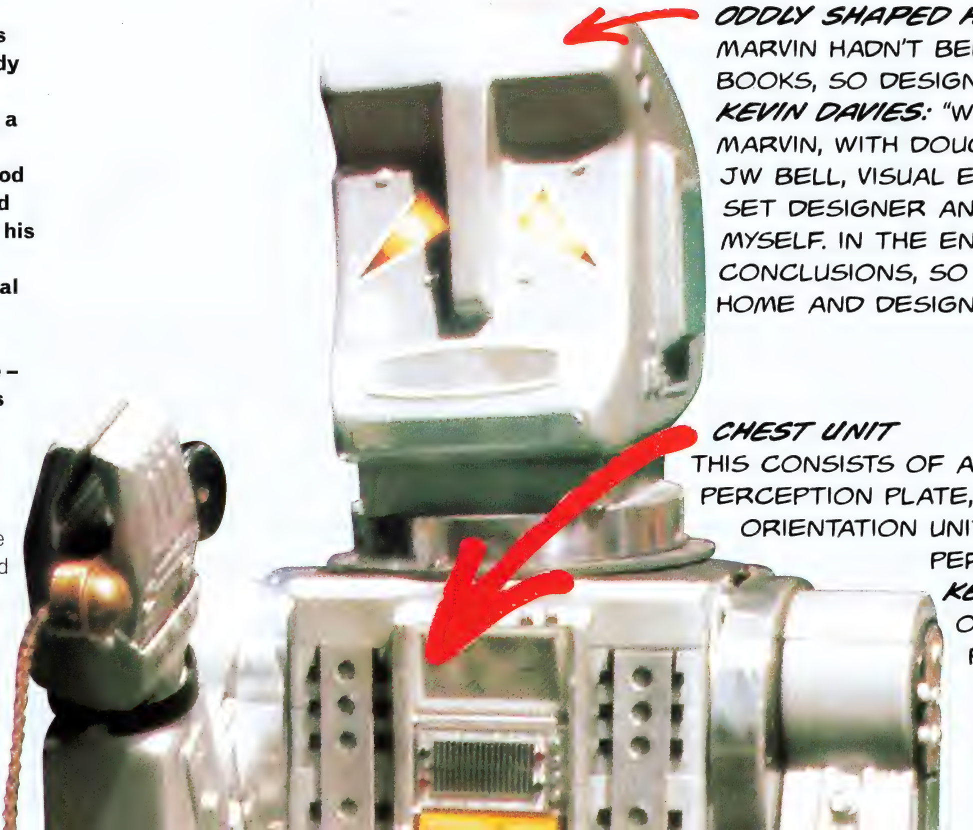
Blueprint
TOMORROW'S TECHNOLOGY TODAY!

MARVIN THE PARANOID ANDROID

DOUGLAS ADAMS' MOST FAMOUS CREATIONS FINALLY CAME TO LIFE WITH THE BBC'S HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY TV SERIES IN 1981...

T*he Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* was a genuine multimedia phenomena in the late '70s and early '80s. Starting out as a Radio 4 comedy series written by *Doctor Who* scripter Douglas Adams, it soon got ideas above its station – first a book (and then more books), then a record, and eventually a TV show, which turned out to be very good indeed. The six-part series carried a decidedly non-plussed modern-day Englishman, Arthur Dent, into space with the help of his friend, Ford Prefect – who turned out to be a reporter for the eponymous intergalactic *Rough Guide.* Assorted partially satirical adventures followed, during which Arthur and Ford gathered a number of companions, one of the most memorable of whom was Marvin the Paranoid Android. Marvin was a sort of robotic Eeyore – he boasted one of the most powerful brains in the galaxy, yet was forever trapped in a deep, dark depression.

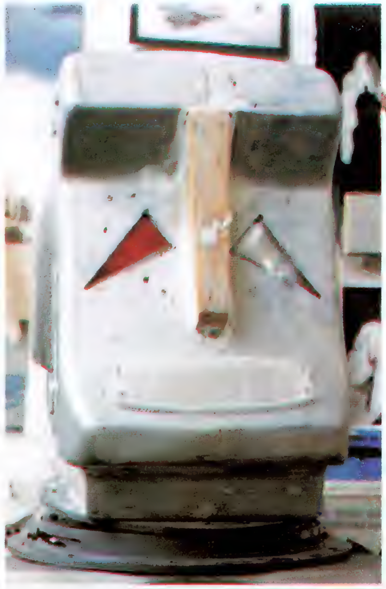
The TV Marvin was voiced by Stephen Moore, and played by David Learner, who had to wear a special costume built by BBC visual effects designer Jim Francis. Among the other people working on the show was Kevin Davies, a young animator who'd managed to pester his way into the production on the back of his love of the radio series. Davies later directed the BBC video *The Making of the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy,* and helped create *The Illustrated Hitchhiker's Guide* for Orion Books...



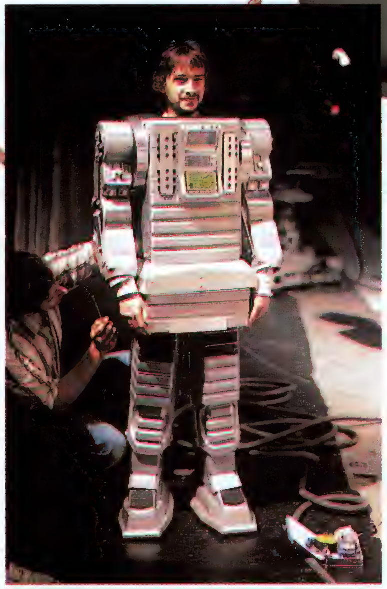
ODDLY SHAPED HEAD
MARVIN HADN'T BEEN DESCRIBED IN DETAIL IN THE BOOKS, SO DESIGNING HIM WAS A CHALLENGE. ***KEVIN DAVIES:*** "WE HAD A MEETING TO DESIGN MARVIN, WITH DOUGLAS ADAMS, DIRECTOR ALAN JW BELL, VISUAL EFFECTS DESIGNER JIM FRANCIS, SET DESIGNER ANDREW HOWE-DAVIES, AND MYSELF. IN THE END WE CAME TO NO REAL CONCLUSIONS, SO JIM FRANCIS JUST HAD TO GO HOME AND DESIGN MARVIN ALL BY HIMSELF!"

CHEST UNIT
THIS CONSISTS OF A DEFOCUSSED TEMPORAL PERCEPTION PLATE, A GALACTIC NAVIGATION & ORIENTATION UNIT, AND A GENUINE PEOPLE PERSONALITY UNIT... ***KEVIN DAVIES:*** "THIS WAS ORIGINALLY A COMMUNICATOR PANEL OFF THE NOSTROMO IN ALIEN! YOU CAN SEE IT BRIEFLY IN THE MOVIE, IN THE SCENE WHERE RIPLEY CONFRONTS ASH."

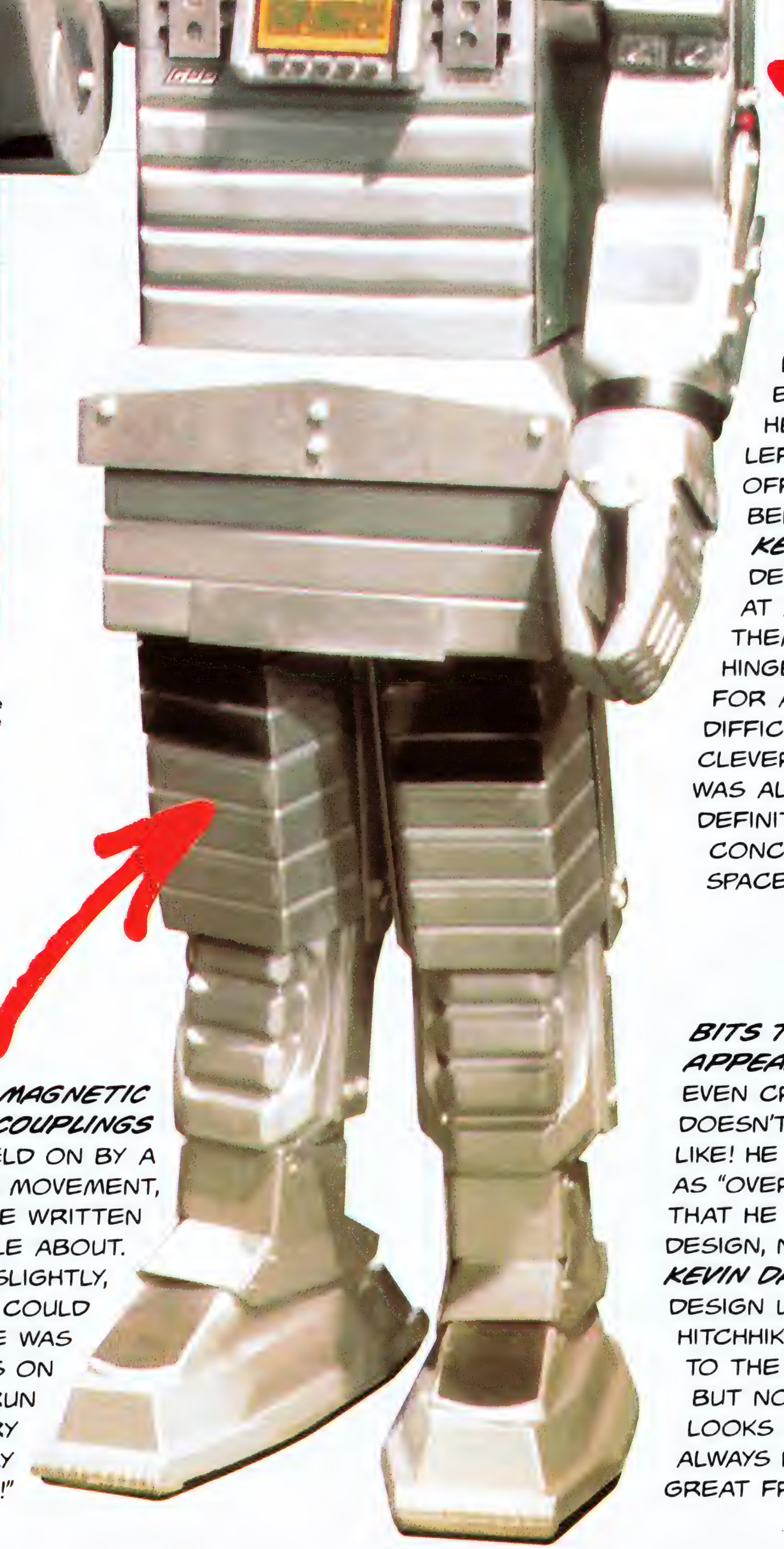
Kevin Davis/Sue Moore



Marvin's head under construction in the **BBC** Visual Effects department. Most of the costume was built from fibreglass and bits of metal, although, as you can see, the nose was made from a lump of wood! The Marvin costume is one of the few props to survive from the TV series. That said, when the character was recreated for a *South Bank Show* special on Douglas Adams, only the head could be found – so Marvin had to wander around in a brown mac, looking like a latter-day version of Robot Monster!



Actor David Learner, who had already played Marvin (in a different costume) on stage for Theatre Clwyd and the ill-fated Rainbow Theatre West End production, also donned the suit for the TV series. This meant he knew all the lines, which was handy, because Stephen Moore (who'd played Marvin on radio) post-synched the voice for TV. Jim Francis designed the Marvin costume to fit Learner by asking him to lie down on a piece of hardboard, and then drawing a line round the prostrate actor!



OBVIOUSLY MECHANICAL ARMS

LOOK CLOSELY AT MARVIN'S ELBOW. IT'S QUITE CLEAR THAT IF HE BENDS HIS RIGHT ARM LIKE HIS LEFT, THE ACTOR INSIDE WILL SLICE OFF HIS ARM EITHER ABOVE OR BELOW THE ELBOW. OUCH!

KEVIN DAVIES: "A CUNNINGLY DESIGNED PIECE OF SLIDING METAL AT MARVIN'S ELBOW JOINTS MADE THEM LOOK LIKE WORKING ROBOTIC HINGES, WITH NO APPARENT ROOM FOR A HUMAN OPERATOR'S ARM. IT'S DIFFICULT TO DESCRIBE, BUT IT WAS A CLEVER SYSTEM THAT MEANT MARVIN WAS ALL HARD SURFACES. WE DEFINITELY DIDN'T WANT HIM TO HAVE CONCERTINA-ARMS, LIKE THE LOST IN SPACE ROBOT."

UNIVERSAL MULTI-WAY, ANTI-MAGNETIC FLOATING TRACTION LEG COUPLINGS

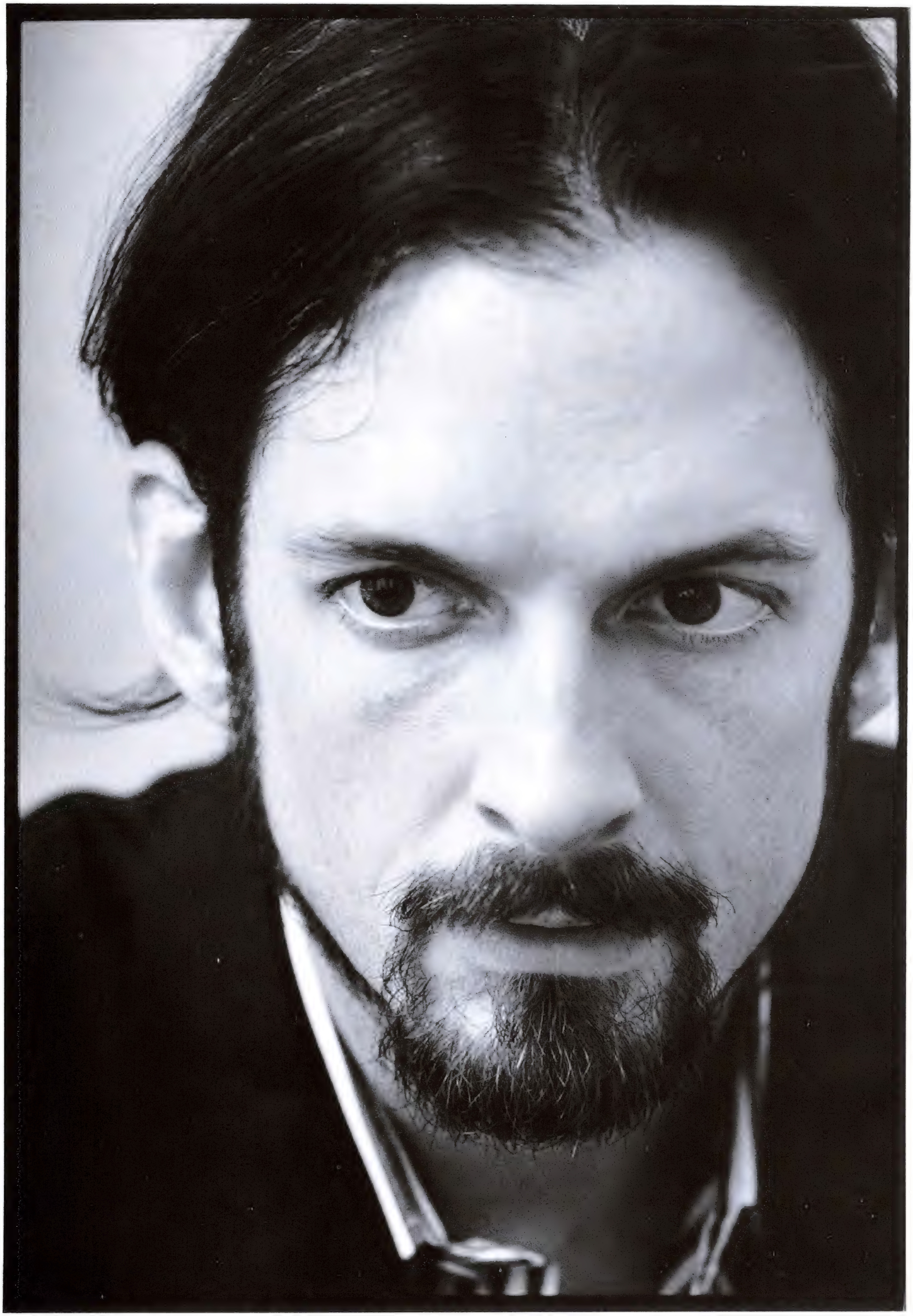
THE LEGS WERE SEPARATE FROM THE MAIN BODY, AND HELD ON BY A LARGE PAIR OF BRACES. THEY RESTRICTED THE ACTOR'S MOVEMENT, BUT THAT CAUSED LITTLE PROBLEM. MOST SCENES WERE WRITTEN SO MARVIN ONLY REALLY HAD TO SHUFFLE ABOUT.

KEVIN DAVIES: "IF DAVID LEARNER LEANED FORWARD SLIGHTLY, THE KNEES LOCKED AND THAT WAS THE ONLY WAY HE COULD REST BETWEEN ACTIONS. IT MADE MARVIN LOOK LIKE HE WAS SLOUCHING FORWARD, WHICH WAS PERFECT IF HE WAS ON CAMERA. WHEN IT RAINED ON LOCATION WE WOULD ALL RUN OFF AND LEAVE DAVID IN THE MIDDLE OF THE QUARRY WHERE WE WERE FILMING, SLUMPED FORWARD MISERABLY AND CLUTCHING A LARGE UMBRELLA IN HIS ROBOTIC GRIP!"

BITS THAT DON'T APPEAR TO HAVE ANY PURPOSE

EVEN CREATOR DOUGLAS ADAMS DOESN'T KNOW WHAT MARVIN LOOKS LIKE! HE JUST SAYS THAT HE SEES HIM AS "OVER-ENGINEERED." IN OTHER WORDS, THAT HE SHOULD HAVE A CLUTTERED DESIGN, NOT BE SLEEK AND STYLISH.

KEVIN DAVIES: "THE SKELETAL BUTLER DESIGN USED IN THE ILLUSTRATED HITCHHIKER'S GUIDE IS PROBABLY CLOSER TO THE REAL MARVIN THAN THIS ONE, BUT NOBODY KNOWS WHAT HE REALLY LOOKS LIKE FOR SURE. PERSONALLY, HE ALWAYS REMINDS ME OF TOBOR THE GREAT FROM THAT OLD MOVIE."



SFX Profile

"THE NEW WILLIAM GIBSON"

Diamond Geezer

HIS BOOKS ARE MULTI-LAYERED ADVENTURES, MIXING TOMORROW'S TECHNOLOGY WITH YESTERDAY'S ARCHETYPES TO CREATE ONE OF CONTEMPORARY SF'S MOST CONVINCING VISIONS OF THE FUTURE. DARK-EYED AND INTENSE, WITH A DRY SENSE OF HUMOUR, NEAL STEPHENSON HAS BEEN CALLED "THE QUENTIN TARANTINO OF POST-CYBERPUNK SCIENCE FICTION." **MARY BRANSCOMBE** UNCOVERED HIM IN A KENSINGTON HOTEL DURING A PROMOTION TOUR FOR HIS MOST RECENT NOVEL, THE DIAMOND AGE...

Neal Stephenson has only written four-and-a-half novels (the half being *Interface*, a collaboration with his uncle which went out under the pen-name "Stephen Bury"), and not all of them pure SF, but he's already been called – by Bruce Sterling, no less – "the hottest science fiction writer in America." His breakthrough came, of course, with *Snow Crash*, probably the most successful SF novel of 1993 and 1994 put together, and the book that established him as the sort of trendy, must-read author who gets his short stories published in *Wired* and *Time* magazines. *Snow Crash* was, wrote SF author Rudy Rucker, like "*Neuromancer* meets *Vineland*. The best book I've read this year."

Today Stephenson enjoys a mainstream success that's rare for SF authors, perhaps only equalled by the likes of Terry Pratchett, or Iain Banks' non-SF novels. His follow up to *Snow Crash*, *The Diamond Age*, is currently repeating *Snow Crash's* success – "when Stephenson talks, you get the feeling he's going to be right," said *Newsweek* – while earlier works, like the ecological thriller, *Zodiac*, are being republished in this country. "Together," wrote Sterling of *Snow Crash* and *The Diamond Age*, "they represent a new era in science fiction."

Tony Sleep/Rob Scott

* * *

SO WHAT'S STEPHENSON'S STUFF ACTUALLY LIKE? AS WITH William Gibson and Sterling before him, describing his work can be tricky: Stephenson novels touch on everything from virtual reality, computer viruses, nanotechnology and how to keep credit card transactions secret to teenage rebellion, martial arts, personal morality and the inner meaning of fairy tales. They're intelligent and, more importantly, damn good reads.

In the bookshops, *Snow Crash* and *The Diamond Age* often appear in the mainstream literature section, rather than on the science fiction shelves. Part of the reason is historic – earlier books, like *The Big U* and *Zodiac*, weren't ever marketed as SF. But another part of it is... Well, can it be that, as with other "good" SF, *Snow Crash* and *The Diamond Age* are seen by the book trade as simply too impressive to be "mere science fiction"?

Stephenson hopes not. "You could argue that everything I've ever done is science fiction, but equally you could argue that it's just fiction that has a lot of technical stuff in it. There's no real logic to the way these labels work, anyway – Michael Crichton writes what could very easily be described as science fiction, but it's never labelled or marketed as such."

Good point. One reason Stephenson may be seen as slightly outside the normal boundaries of SF is that, unlike most SF writers, he's never published short stories in the traditional SF markets. A couple have appeared in more unusual places, however – "Spew," a story about monitoring everything from shopping to cable TV, appeared in *Wired*, and "Simoleons," about the development of cyber-cash, cropped up in *Time* magazine.

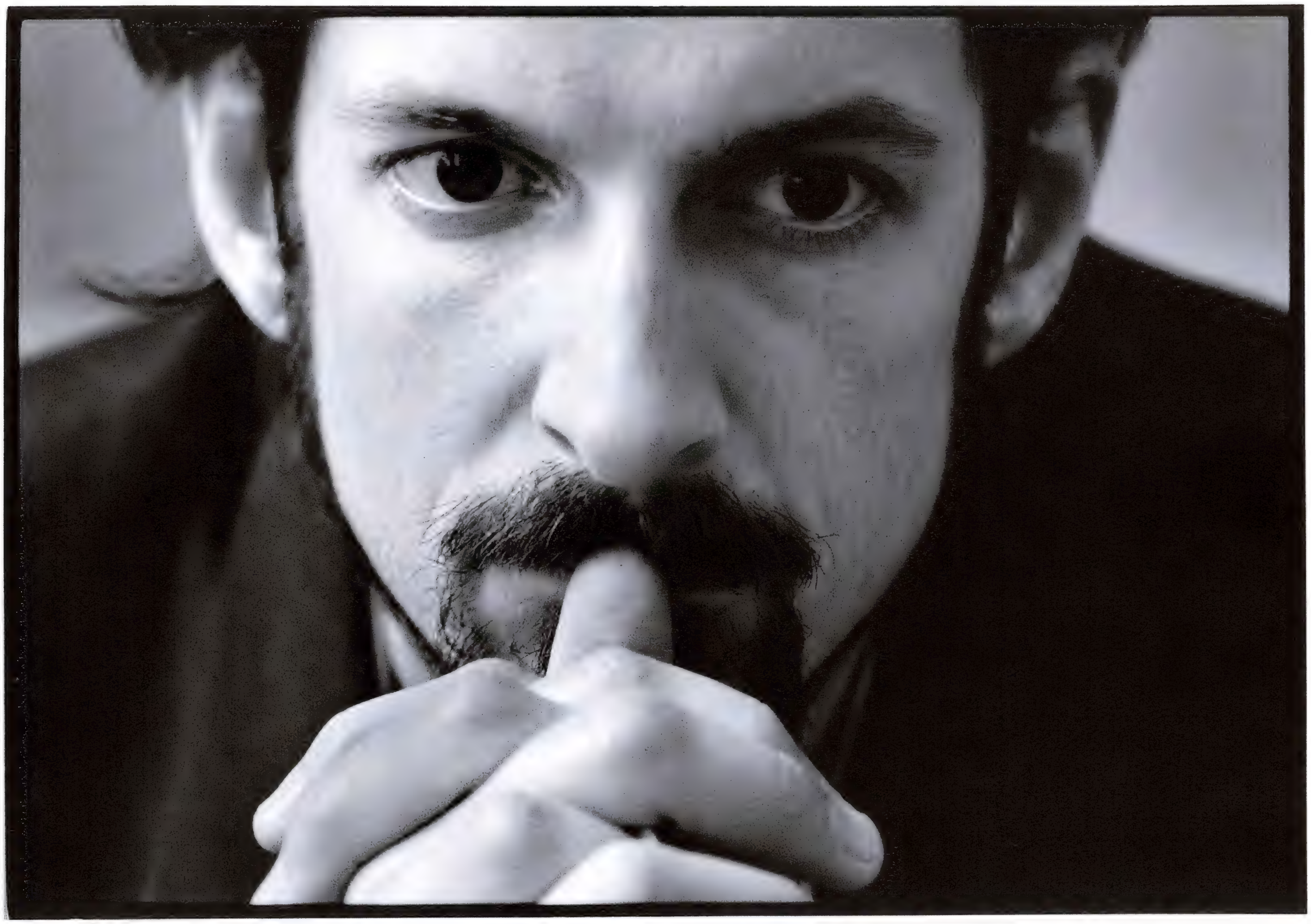
"It's just that I don't know much about short stories," he laughs. "I don't write many of them, and I don't think I'm particularly good at them. There's nothing very unusual about my contributing to *Wired* – they like to publish fiction, but don't often come across any that's suitable – but the thing in *Time* was a complete fluke. They were doing this special issue on technology, decided they wanted some fiction, and hired me as the 'cyberlebrity' of the moment to write it for them. You can't just ring up *Time* magazine and ask if they want to publish your story!"

* * *

NEAL'S MAIN CHARACTERS ARE OFTEN VERY ACTIVE – INDIVIDUALS WHO use martial arts, ride inflatable boats round harbours and dive heroically into polluted waters. Exciting stuff, but quite different, I suspect, to the sort of thing he himself normally gets up to...

Er, you don't spend a lot of your time fighting and running about, do you?

"Not very much!" he laughs. "Though the main character in *Zodiac* was loosely inspired by a good friend of mine. A lot of people are surprised to find how different writers are from the characters in their



books – I think they simply underestimate the amount of imaginative work that goes into a piece of fiction."

As with most of Stephenson's work, *Zodiac* paints a very negative picture of politics – all governments are manipulative; all politicians as corrupt. It's very cynical, isn't it?

"I think that if you do even a cursory reading of 20th century history, you can't help but come away with a somewhat sceptical attitude towards government power," Stephenson explains. "But it doesn't have to glow out of any fundamental philosophical or political belief system. Really, it's very simple – if there's a big beast that keeps running around eating people, then you can see that it ought to be caged or done away with. You don't need to base that opinion on any kind of belief system. I'm actually very sceptical of any kind of totalising ideology, and that includes Libertarianism – but it also includes just about any governmental system you can think of."

So what's the answer?

"Actually, the more I go along, the more respect I have for some of the really old tried and tested political systems, like the United States constitution, or the parliamentary system in Britain. They're both imperfect, and they've both been vulnerable to excesses of government power occasionally, but I think those systems still have a lot to offer."

* * *

The technical side of Neal Stephenson's books is always very convincing – you get the impression he knows a lot about exotic weapons, cryptography, computer networks... Pretty much everything, really. So how much is real, and how much is simply made up?

"Well, I've been programming computers since I was 14," Neal says, "and along the way I've become reasonably fluent in about eight different computer languages. So while I haven't actually sat down and written cryptocode, I'd like to think I have enough grounding in math and computers to be able to give a convincing account of how this stuff might work in the future, and what the bugs would be."

Could you make a living as a programmer, do you think?

"Well, I've never been paid to write code, but I come from a family of techies. One of my grandfathers was a physicist, the other was a biochemist, and my father is an electrical engineering professor. I grew up in a one-industry town centered on a technical university, so when I was growing up all of my friends' parents were PhDs and hard scientists."

So that's normal to you?

"Wherever it is you grow up, you think that's normal, and I certainly thought it was normal until I left. I've been immersed in that world ever since I was born, and I feel reasonably comfortable with it. I studied physics in college, and only moved over into geography because they were doing a lot of computer stuff at the time. But though I did work as a research assistant in physics labs during the Summers, I've never used my programming skills to make money."

So how feasible is the science in your books? Is it hard science, or just flights of fancy? And do you expect to see any of it to crop up in real life?

"I think the best approach is to stay with hard science as far as it can go," he explains, "and then, if you want, go on a little flight of fancy – but try to blur the dividing line a little. So in *Snow Crash,* for example, the science and the computer science is pretty straight, and the historical research is all for real – the only thing that's fancy is that one extra step of imagining that an ancient virus could actually infect the brain."

And the nanotechnology in *The Diamond Age?*

"That's another example. The nanotech in that book has been vetted by the leading experts in the field, like Drexler *[author of* Engines of Creation *– Ed.],* and Merkle [*a researcher at Xerox, who's worked out the major equations describing how nanotechnology would work – Ed.*] gave it a good review after the fact. The one complaint Merkle had is with the notion of a centralised feed system – he said that isn't really technically sound, because it wouldn't be hard for every house to have its own individual source, so you wouldn't have to have it all networked the way I described. I've no doubt that he's right, but in a way that's not the point. My feeling is that if you were designing a new society around nanotechnology, you'd probably feel the need for some kind of central control mechanism, so you'd build it that way deliberately – not because you had to, but because you wanted to."

You can never really be certain how things are going to develop in the future, anyway...

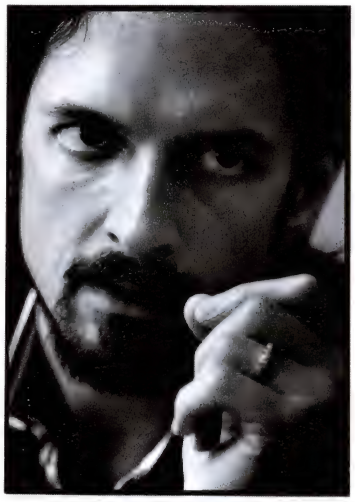
"No," Stephenson agrees. "Take the bit in *The Diamond Age,* where the Drummers are shown as able to use some kind of collective mind to break into the most advanced crypto schemes – well, there's a great deal of speculation there. But, on the other hand, we've all seen examples of math prodigies who could do amazing things in ways that couldn't quite be explained, so at least it's got some grounding."

* * *

Stephenson's books tend to see nanotech as the next big technological development, rather than other popular choices, like artificial intelligence, or a singularity, with people uploading themselves into computers. Part of the reason is because he's pretty resistant to any scenario that presumes any equivalence between the brain and computers – "It just seems too schematic to me, and whenever people have these schematic ideas about what's going to happen in the future, the reality always turns out to be much more complicated," he says – and partly because he simply finds it easy to be sceptical about artificial intelligence.

"The predictions of the AI people have been just so pathetically and consistently far off the mark for such a long time that I think one has to assume there's something they're not getting," he laughs. "You almost have to take a cautious, sceptical approach. Nanotechnology, on the other hand, strikes me as an interesting idea – in fact, after reading Drexler's book I felt it would be very hard to responsibly write any science fiction that didn't largely revolve around nanotech. I had to see what could be done with it."

He doesn't see nanotech as being the solution to our every problem, however. After all, if he did he'd surely feel forced to write about post-scarcity utopias all the time, where there aren't any problems left and it's all terribly, terribly boring...



"Like *Star Trek,* you mean? Yeah! Well, there's a really fundamental split there in one's attitudes about human nature. The *Star Trek* attitude is that the only reason we're nasty to each other is because sometimes we run out of stuff, and that if we stopped running out of stuff we would all stop being nasty to each other, and then our only problems would occur when our spaceship inadvertently ran into a tachyon storm out in the middle of nowhere! And I don't see any reason to buy that view of human nature."

So we're going to keep on being nasty to each other?

"Right. We're very close to a post-scarcity future right now – at least in my country. There's poverty, but there's not starvation, except in really odd places, and there's disease but there's not plague. There's not people dying in the streets, and there's homelessness, but most people can find a roof over their heads if they need it – it may be in a homeless shelter, but it's something. But it certainly hasn't stopped people being nasty to each other. I mean, look at OJ. He wasn't lacking for anything, nobody in that sick sub-culture in LA was lacking for anything, but all it did was remove all the limits from how tawdry they could be to each other. That's all post-scarcity did for them – break down the barriers that kept them from being as grotesque as they could theoretically be."

That feels likes one of the points being made in *The Diamond Age.*

"Well, it's kind of a sledgehammer point, but you've got this group of people, the thetes, who have everything they need in the way of food, shelter and even information, and they're still miserable wretches, just like the Dickensian miserable wretches."

* * *

Ah yes, Dickens. You can't help but think of classic Victorian novels when reading *The Diamond Age.* After all, it follows the lives of its characters in a decidedly Dickensian fashion...

"I guess that's true," Stephenson concedes, "but it wasn't a conscious thing – it's just that I've always had a bent for writing long, complex novels, and I suppose writing a pseudo-Victorian novel gave me the licence to give in to that!"

Despite all the nastiness in *The Diamond Age,* though, Nell manages to escape. Does that mean, then, that you believe in the redeeming power of education?

"Sure. I don't think education by itself is a panacea, but I think it can raise people out of the real nastiness. That said, there are plenty of educated people who behave badly too, so I think there's also a need for cultural norms that encourage some sort of ethical system, whatever it may be – whether it's based on scientific rationality, or some kind of religion or whatever. I think there's a need for ethics and morals, if you will, but education is a good start."

Talking of education, at the end of *Snow Crash* we're left wondering what might happen to one of the characters, YT, and in *The Diamond Age* there's this prim and proper pseudo-Victorian schoolma'am racing her wheelchair and coming out with phrases like "chiselled spam." So tell us – is Miss Matheson actually YT?

"I prefer not to issue a definitive opinion on that."

So she might be?

"I prefer not to issue a definitive opinion on the subject!"

Sigh.

* * *

We move onto Interface, the novel Stephenson co-wrote with his uncle using the pen-name Stephen Bury. It's all about the marketing of politicians – "A very straightforward observation of reality in the United States," he says – and will be followed by further Stephen Bury novels.

"We just finished one called *The Cobweb,*" he tells me, "which is going to be out in the States next Summer. It's set in a Twin Cities area in Iowa in 1990. One of the cities is a university town – lofty and affluent, up on the bluffs, oak trees and gothic buildings – and the other one is down in the flood plain, and is a really depressed industrial town. There's a deputy county sheriff from this town who becomes aware that some of the Iraqi foreign students are engaging in highly disturbing extra-curricular activities, and it follows from there. It's the adventures of this sheriff trying to deal with this problem when nobody else takes it seriously."

"Reality is an adaptive system; simple things don't happen in reality. Reality changes as things are happening. I just think that the future's going to be really, really complicated."

More "pure" Neal Stephenson books are on the way too, but further down the road...

"I need to get back into a productive cycle again," he explains, "because at the moment I'm writing a screenplay, and I've written a script for a CD-ROM game. We don't call it a game, though – it's an 'edfotainucation' piece set in Seattle in the present day. It's a noir psychological thriller, and is all to do with how our memories work, and putting an audio-visual interface on that. The production company is Shadowcatcher Entertainment, a newish company in Seattle that was founded by some people who got out of Hollywood because they couldn't take it any more."

How into things like CD-ROM are you? Do you think they'll ever replace books, for instance?

"No, though they may replace certain types of books – reference books, do-it-yourself books, cookbooks, atlases. Anything where there's cross-referencing, and lots of graphics. But I'm quite convinced people will be reading novels on paper a thousand years from now. I think it's a technology that's well developed and pretty much reached perfection, and it will keep on going."

What about films? Is work progressing on the film of *Snow Crash,* and how involved are you?

"It's happening," he explains, "but with a script written by someone else, which is fine by me. As far as I know, the only person who's physically right for the part of Hiro is Roland Gift, but I have a feeling that the people who make the movie will be a lot less concerned with

> "I'm constantly pointing out that the 20th century has been dystopian, and nothing shown in my books is as dystopian as a good part of the world has been for a good part of the 20th century."

matching the description in the book than with marquee value, so I wouldn't be surprised if Hiro underwent some racial changes. Other than that, I think Patrick Stewart would make a good librarian."

Do you have any idea how long it might take to make?

"Well, from the time the fateful cheque is written to the time they actually begin shooting will probably be a year, and from the time filming begins to when it comes out could easily be another year, so not soon!"

* * *

We get back to talking about the books, and I point out that there's such a lot going on in your average Stephenson novel that it can become quite difficult to pick out individual themes or messages. Do you feel people understand your books, or are they consistently misinterpreted?

"Well, I think that a lot of people felt *Snow Crash* was an all out attack on all forms of religious belief," he sighs, "and it wasn't. It was more an attempt to point out a distinction between religions that are kind of viral, and not based on any kind of rational thinking, versus ones that are 'Religions of the Book' – i.e. based on a fixed text and immutable."

Anything else?

"Another one I get all the time is the d-word – dystopia. A lot of people can't talk about this kind of fiction without calling it a dystopian view of the future, and so I'm constantly pointing out that the 20th century has been pretty damn dystopian, and that nothing in any of my books is actually as dystopian as a good part of the world has been for a good part of the 20th century!"

In other words, you're not half as negative as it might appear?

"Ultimately, I don't go to either extreme – I don't believe in the *Star Trek* world, and I don't believe in the George Orwell world either. People will continue doing good things and bad things to each other, and there's going to be a really fine granularity to it. You won't have entire continents suffering from massive persecution, but you may have a lot of individual people who are being persecuted within a family or a small community instead. I just think the future's going to be really, really complicated."

Both Snow Crash *(£8.99) and* The Diamond Age *(£9.99) are available from all good bookshops in paperback, and come highly recommended.*

SFX Profile

"The new William Gibson"

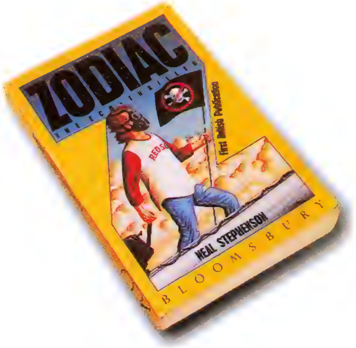
NEAL STEPHENSON ON NEAL STEPHENSON

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF NEAL STEPHENSON, WITH A FEW TERSE, BUT INCISIVE, COMMENTS FROM THE MAN HIMSELF...

The Big U [1984]

A gonzo campus caper, described by John Clute as "rather in the style of National Lampoon's *Animal House*." Only with a brain.

Stephenson: "*The Big U* is essentially sophomoric campus humour – it has a few worthy moments, a few bright spots, but it's probably not worth seeking out."



Zodiac [1988]

An ecological thriller, following the strange adventures of Sangamon Taylor as he tries to avoid being poisoned by chemical companies, or sacrificed by drug-crazed heavy metal fans, before he has time to save the world.

Stephenson: "*Zodiac* is a fun book, and one I still have great affection for."

Snow Crash [1992]

The future of virtual reality and the end of the nation state collide as the katana-wielding Hiro Protagonist, and the hip skateboard courier YT, bike across America, running from a prehistoric computer virus that infects the human mind.

Stephenson: "*Snow Crash* is the famous one, and it's probably worthless for me to say anything else about it."

Interface

[1994, co-written as Stephen Bury]

The conspiracy that controls all the other conspiracies decides that the best way to make money is to control – not assassinate – a US president. Take a senator with a stroke, implant a radio-controlled microchip and you can react to the polls in real time. But can the senator stay human?

Stephenson: "*Interface* is meant to be an entertaining, but not stupid, book. I hope that's what it turned out to be."

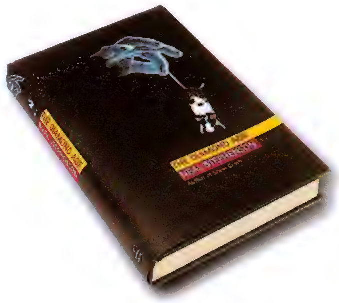
The Diamond Age

[1995]

In the nanotech age of plenty, a streetwise tearaway from a South China slum on the other side of tomorrow steals a book to give to his sister Nell, and the Illustrated Primer changes her life and that of its inventor.

SFX said "violence, adventure, sex, serious hardware and an intriguing plot – it's all here, and it makes an excellent story."

Stephenson: "*The Diamond Age* is my take on nanotechnology, which I think is going to be very important, and on the way it's a continuation of some of the thoughts on society and culture that are there in *Snow Crash*."



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THE TIME TUNNEL

1966

TWO-FISTED, BUDDY-BUDDY SCIENTISTS TRAPPED IN "THE INFINITE CORRIDORS OF TIME," DR DOUG PHILLIPS AND DR TONY NEWMAN WERE THE QUINTESSENTIAL IRWIN ALLEN HEROES, AND THE TIME TUNNEL WAS THE QUINTESSENTIAL IRWIN ALLEN SHOW. **JON ABBOTT** REMEMBERS THE ULTIMATE CULT TV SERIES, REPEATED MORE TIMES IN THE UK THAN ANYTHING THIS SIDE OF STAR TREK...

Our heroes: James Darren (as Dr Tony Newman, top right) and Robert Colbert (Dr Doug Phillips, bottom right) did the time-travelling; Lee Meriwether (Dr Ann McGregor, top left) and Whit Bissell (General Heywood Kirk, bottom left) stayed home and worried.

One of the best quotes about Irwin Allen – creator and producer of four of the best-remembered sci-fi/fantasy shows of the '60s – sums the man up completely. In their book *Fantastic Television*, authors Gary Gerani and Paul Schulman claimed the career of the man behind *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea, Lost in Space* and *Land of the Giants*, "combined two great gifts: The inventor's, for using imaginative special effects, and the farmer's, for using everything twice!" Says it all, really...

Nowhere were Allen's particular gifts more evident than in *The Time Tunnel*, based very loosely on a book by Murray Leinster, who was later commissioned to write the novelisation of the series. *The Time Tunnel* TV show concerned the escapades of Doug Phillips and Tony Newman (Robert Colbert and James Darren), a couple of multi-skilled scientists who were plunged into "the infinite corridors of time" while trying to prove that their time travel experiments were worth every penny of the eight billion tax dollars already spent on them. In a way, they were successful. They proved their time tunnel worked, all right – but with one catch. Once in, they couldn't get back...

Robert Colbert (as Doug Phillips, left) and James Darren (Tony Newman) – two-fisted time-trapped troubleshooters.

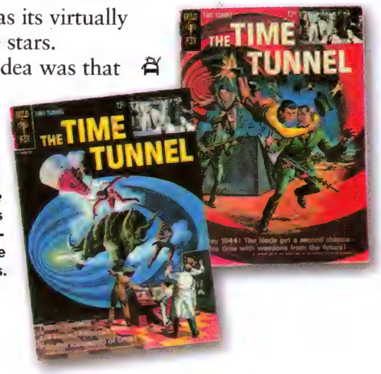
The premise, then, was simple. While their harassed fellow scientists back at the Time Tunnel control centre wrung their hands and fretted, Phillips and Newman bounced through time, cannoning from one sticky situation to the next. All their controllers could do was throw them back into the time stream again, to end up goodness knows where, whenever things got too hot for them – which was every week, as this pair seemed to be just about the unluckiest men alive. If they turned up in the Wild West, it would be just in time to meet George Armstrong Custer or Billy the Kid; if they took a trip to Greece, they'd end up inside a wooden horse; if they vacationed in Hawaii, it would only be a couple of hours before the bombing of Pearl Harbour...

As soon became clear, the Time Tunnel was a time and space machine capable of dropping our boys off anywhere. If Dougie landed in France, he'd either be brainwashed by Nazis, or end up at the mercy of Madam Guillotine during the French Revolution. Put our boys on a desert island, and it would turn out to be Devil's Island, Krakatoa, or swarming with pirates. Every nice cruise ship would turn out to be the Titanic, each friendly sanctuary from a battlefield, the Alamo. And wherever they went, be it the D-Day beaches or Sherwood Forest, the first thing Doug and Tony would do is get involved in a punch-up...

All this, of course, was a clever way for Allen to use library footage from either the Fox back catalogue or foreign films, most of which was, to the creators' credit, integrated with the original footage very neatly indeed. Only occasionally – the futuristic space adventure "One Way to the Moon" and the Marco Polo story "Attack of the Barbarians" spring to mind – was the library footage obtrusively obvious.

Who's who?

The biggest problem with *The Time Tunnel* was its virtually interchangeable stars. Originally, the idea was that



The Time Tunnel **was quite a hit in its time, albeit not quite the '60s equivalent of *The X-Files*. As well as the novels, spin-offs included these rather lurid comics.**

A few things you probably didn't know about...

The Time Tunnel

- *The Time Tunnel's* first run on British TV lasted just 13 weeks in 1968, which meant that less than half the series was initially broadcast. Later on, it was transferred from the BBC to ITV, where most of the remaining episodes were shown at different times during the early '70s.
- Author Murray Leinster (winner of 1956's Best Novelette Hugo, and nicknamed "The Dean of SF") wrote two *Time Tunnel* novels, *The Time Tunnel* and *Timeslip!* (both 1967) based on the show. His earlier *Time Tunnel* novel is said to have inspired the show, but is otherwise unrelated.
- In episodes like "Merlin the Magician" (where our heroes meet – guess who?) and "Raiders from Outer Space" (aliens try to destroy the world during the battle of Khartoum), The Time Tunnel appeared to abandon its stylised-but-basically-accurate "historical hotspots" in favour of pure fantasy. They weren't as fantastic, however, as the vision of 1978 seen in "Town of Terror!"
- Irwin Allen's follow-up to *The Time Tunnel* was *Land of the Giants* (1968), which detailed the exploits of a spaceship crew from 1983 (!) stranded on an Earth-like world where everything was 12 times larger! Despite being Allen's most expensive series, it only ran for two seasons.

James Darren's Tony Newman would be young and impetuous, while Robert Colbert's Doug Phillips would be slightly older and more laid back. In reality, though, the pair were almost identical. Not only were the actors given similar lines (indeed, most of the time it was *Colbert* who'd lose his cool), but often the two would swap dialogue around on set anyway, Darren giving some of his to the occasionally short-changed Colbert! The result was that all you could really say about the two was that they were definitely good friends – each would regularly risk his own life to help the other.

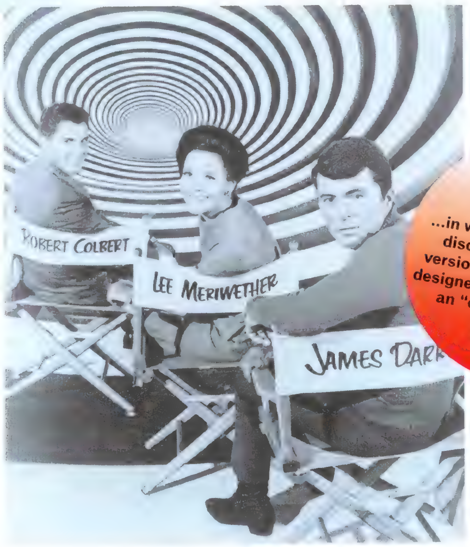
Unfortunately, the minor characters weren't any more distinctive. Whit Bissell, who played General Kirk, had spent his early career playing weasels and villains, but as he grew older drifted into playing authority figures. He'd played so many army generals (see *The Outer Limits* episode "Nightmare," or *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea's* "The Peacemaker") that one suspects he came equipped with his own uniform. He played his General Kirk as a humanitarian forced to make impossible decisions on the spot – although he was never afraid to make them, and with conviction too. Lee Meriwether as Ann McGregor and John Zaremba as Ray Swain were less well-served, and ended up with little to do but fret and look concerned as they anxiously attempted to locate the lads and transfer them out of trouble...

Where are they now?

James Darren had been a star of teenage beach movies before he came to the attention of Irwin Allen when guest-starring in an episode of *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*. Following *The Time Tunnel*, he appeared in a 20-minute promo film for a proposed Irwin Allen series that never happened, *The Man from the 25th Century*, in which he played Andro, a fellow sent to Earth to prepare for an invasion, but who then rebels against his masters.

When this failed to sell, he played a brief cameo role in another busted Allen pilot, *City Beneath the Sea*, before returning to his singing career for the rest of the '70s. He returned to TV, looking not much older, in the cop show *TJ Hooker*, eventually turning to directing. Today, he hangs out with the Cannell/Lupo/Bellisario boys club, having directed episodes of Cannell's *A-Team*, *Hunter*, and *Stingray*, Lupo's *Werewolf*, *Hardball*, and *Something is Out There*, and Bellisario's *Quantum Leap*, among others.

Like many TV heroes of the '60s, Robert Colbert started to slip into mostly villainous guest-starring roles as he aged, starting with *Land of the Giants*, and a heroic supporting role (as Captain Dum-Dum) in the unsold *City Beneath the Sea*. His career began as a contract player for Warners, with a recurring role in *Maverick* and numerous guest appearances in Warner's Western and detective series. Since *The Time Tunnel*, he's appeared in such series as *Quincy*, *Mike Hammer*, *Crazy Like A Fox*, *Foley Square*, *Hunter*, *Murder She Wrote*, *In the Heat of the Night* and *Wings*, as well as an on-going role in '70s soap *The Young and the Restless*, though today he's happily retired. His staid, square-jawed persona in *The Time Tunnel* hid a wicked sense of humour – for proof, check out his cameo in the hilarious B-movie spoof sequences of *Amazon Women on the Moon*.



James Darren and Robert Colbert (and the Time Tunnel) are joined by their hand-wringing co-star, Lee Meriwether.

Lee Meriwether was a former Miss America, who also played Catwoman in the 1966 *Batman* film, and starred in *The 4-D Man*. Her TV roles included *Star Trek*, *Doctor Kildare*, *The FBI*, *Mission: Impossible*, *The Man from UNCLE*, *Mannix*, *Hawk*, and *Land of the Giants*. She also had a regular role in the awful *Barnaby Jones*, a ludicrous '70s series about a geriatric detective. Today, she keeps busy with infomercials, and can be caught in the dire late '80s *New Munsters* series, where she plays Lily.

Both Whit Bissell and John Zaremba were veterans of '50s SF – it's tough to find a creature feature from that period that doesn't star one or the other. Bissell has now retired and is living in California; Zaremba died in 1986.

Underlying themes

The Time Tunnel was a series rich in bizarre – and sometimes absurd – imagery: There was Doug, striding purposefully into the Tunnel for the first time in an attempt to retrieve his young colleague from the deck of the Titanic, dressed in the costume of the period and armed with a newspaper detailing the disaster; there was Tony meeting himself as a young boy before the attack on Pearl Harbour, and later weeping over the dead body of his father; there were the scientists inadvertently bringing Halley's Comet back through the Tunnel; a menacing silver alien appearing from the far future and blithely abducting Ann; a military policeman gunning down Trojan warriors with a machine gun, and returning to the 20th century as an old man; a disorientated 16th century pirate staggering out of the Tunnel and running riot in the control centre, with the luckless Ann as his hostage...

Indeed, *The Time Tunnel* has become, perhaps, the ultimate cult TV show. Its 30 episodes have been shown many times in the last ten years. Initially aired on BBC 1, and then ITV in the early '70s, it was revived by Sky in the mid-'80s, picked up by ITV for the late-night merry-go-round, bought by Channel 4 in a double deal with *Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea*, and then moved over to Bravo, where it has just been relicensed for another showing in '96. In other words, almost everyone will have seen the show at least once.

And why not? Despite its weak points, science fiction has come up with few images as striking as the Tunnel itself, a swirling vortex that almost seemed to suck you into the TV screen. For that alone *The Time Tunnel* deserves to be remembered...

Do you remember the episode...

...in which Tony and Doug discovered a primitive version of the Time Tunnel designed by a scientist from an "enemy" country?

Answer at the bottom of the page

Fact File

Regular cast

Dr Doug Phillips: **Robert Colbert**
Dr Tony Newman: **James Darren**
Gen. Heywood Kirk: **Whit Bissell**
Dr Ann McGregor: **Lee Meriwether**
Dr Raymond Swain: **John Zaremba**
Security Chief Jiggs: **Wesley Lau**
Panicky Jerry: **Sam Groom**

Recurring cast

Developed for television by **Irwin Allen**, **Shimon Wincelberg, Harold Jack Bloom** from **Murray Leinster**
Executive Producer: **Irwin Allen**
Director of Photography: **Winton Hoch**
Special effects: **LB Abbott**
Story editor: **William Welch**
Theme: **John Williams**

Total number of episodes: **30**
First US airdate: **9 September 1966**
First UK airdate: **9 July 1968**
Last original episode aired: **7 April 1967**

Some TV precedents: *You Are There*, *Captain Z-Ro*

Some TV descendents: *Star Trek's* "The City on the Edge of Forever," Z-movie *Journey to the Centre of Time*, the pilot *Probe* and subsequent series *Search* (UK: *Search Control)*, the pilot for *The Time Travellers*, *The Time Machine* TV movie, *Fantastic Journey*, *Time Express*, *Voyagers*, *Quantum Leap*, *Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventures*, the pilot *Doorways* (does Alexei Sayles' *Drunks in Time* count?), and *Sliders*.

Guest stars of interest: Michael Rennie, Tom Skerritt, Ellen Burstyn (McRae), Robert Duvall, Carroll O'Connor, John Saxon, Robert Walker Jnr., Michael Ansara, Malachi Throne, John Hoyt.

Answer: "Secret Weapon," written by Theodore Apstein.

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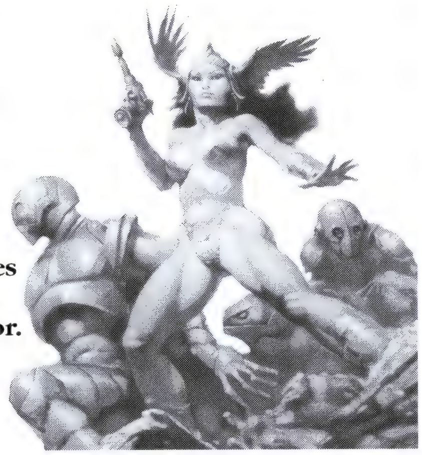

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It's the world's greatest monthly science fiction review guide – over 20 pages of the hottest new films, TV shows, books, videos, comics, models and more. Only in SFX.

REVIEWS

From the new Spidey cartoons to the latest novel from SF legend Arthur C Clarke...

You know the name. You know the number. You know the rating.

Inspired by the sheer brilliance of *GoldenEye*, this issue's guide to the SFX review ratings system is based on James Bonds, old, new, and theoretical...

A+	Sean Connery: *Of course.* The original and the best.
A	Sean Bean: So brilliant as 006 in *GoldenEye*, only his blonde hair and Sheffield accent count against him.
A-	Pierce Brosnan: Frighteningly good-looking, Brosnan wears the clothes like no other Bond.
B+	Mel Gibson: *Braveheart* proved Mel can do accents...
B	Daniel Day Lewis: ...while *Last of the Mohicans* proved Dan can turn his hand to action.
B-	Timothy Dalton: Technically brilliant, but too intense.
C+	George Lazenby: Not as bad as some say.
C	David Niven: Miscast.
C-	Roger Moore: Asleep.
D+	Barry Nelson: American.
D	Woody Allen: A joke?
D-	Lewis Collins: Well, *he* thought he could do it, at any rate.

STIFF
It ain't worth

***Tank Girl* comes to a vid near you...**

FILM Reviews

PAGE 70

Mary Reilly gets beaten in the Jekyll & Hyde stakes by the spoof *Dr Jekyll and Ms Hyde*! Ye Gods! Plus, odd Danish genre movie *The Kingdom,* and more...

TV Reviews

PAGE 72

The new US season of *Lois & Clark* reviewed, plus *Spider-Man*, and the one-shot *Bliss* is picked up for more TV movies...

VIDEO Reviews

PAGE 76

Batman Forever comes straight out on sell-through, plus *Dredd* and *Tank Girl* to rent, *Terminal Force* and much more...

BOOK Reviews

PAGE 82

Arthur C Clarke's latest, *Richter 10,* co-written with Mike McQuay. Plus two from Christopher Fowler, *The Unofficial X-Files Companion*, and more...

COMIC Reviews

PAGE 90

Frank Miller and Dave Gibbons' Martha Washington is, we'd argue, the greatest science fiction character in modern comics. Plus John Constantine stars in the glossy two-parter *The Horrorist, Judge Dredd* meets *Lobo*, and some other stuff...

MODEL Reviews

PAGE 92

Judge Dredd's Lawgiver handgun was completely redesigned for the movie. This month we tried putting one together...

NEW MEDIA Reviews

PAGE 94

LucasArts' Spielberg-assisted *The Dig* project has been in the works for years. This month we see how good it *really* is...

TOSH Reviews

PAGE 96

More of the usual odds 'n' sods, including *There and Back Again: The Map of The Hobbit*, a couple of soundtrack CDs, Data sings (!), and the new *Star Trek* Trivial Pursuit set.

“A high point of the 1995 London Film Festival, *The Kingdom* is most succinctly (if inadequately) described as a cross between *ER* and *Twin Peaks*.”

THE KINGDOM

It's odd, it's Danish, and it's one of the best genre films to hit the cinema in years

The masonic surgeons' guild, Sons of the Kingdom, convenes for yet another bizarre session at the table.

Distributor: **ICA Projects**
Director: **Lars Von Trier**
Starring: **Lots of people with things like ø and ö in their names**
Cert: **TBA**
Release: **5 January** (Limited showings)
Running time: **279 mins** (subtitled)

Text: **Jeremy Clarke**

When American TV movies and the like get a theatrical release in the UK – not that it's happened for a while – it usually means utter dross like *Buck Rogers in the 25th Century* or *Battlestar Galactica*.

Happily, when similar fare from Europe makes it to the big screen, the results are often a good deal more worthwhile. *Das Boot* springs to mind. And Danish oddity *The Kingdom* continues the trend. A high point of

the 1995 London Film Festival, *The Kingdom* is most succinctly (if totally inadequately) described as a cross between *ER* and *Twin Peaks* – a surreal soap with a hospital setting, complete with liberal smatterings of the bizarre *and* the paranormal.

Danish *enfant terrible* Lars Von Trier may be familiar from such mainstream features as *The Element of Crime* and *Europa,* but he finds his feet more firmly than ever before with *The Kingdom.* Although made for TV, it has a pleasingly cinematic feel, and Trier obviously revels in the sheer weirdness of his material.

The storyline's unusual, to say the least... Inter-racial rivalry between Danes and Swedes abounds at Copenhagen's Kingdom Hospital – so much so that Swedish consultant neurosurgeon Helmer carefully removes his Volvo's hubcaps before entering on his first day at the institute, presumably scared that his handling of limited budgetary resources won't have made him very popular with the largely Danish staff. That, however, turns out to be the least of his problems...

Among the bizarre collection of patients at the hospital, for instance, is Mrs Drusse, a medium who's constantly engineering her re-admission via bogus medical symptoms, so that she can investigate a noisy spirit who lives in the lift shaft. But who does the voice of a little girl she can also hear belong to?

Meanwhile, there's the bureaucratic Operation Morning Air to worry about, not to mention the surgeons' lodge, Sons of the Kingdom ("allegiance to the medical sciences, enmity to the occult"), practical jokes involving severed heads from the morgue, water erupting from pavements outside and a ghost ambulance call. And in the basement below, two Downs Syndrome dishwashers comment – like some Greek chorus – on "the building crying" and other matters. With their childlike simplicity, and utter lack of professional ("scientific") arrogance, they appear to be the only characters who know what's really going on...

A masterpiece transcending its small screen origins, *The Kingdom* is by turns funny, frightening and thought-provoking. It's not easily pigeon-holed, but it's certainly weird – and clearly influenced by the work of fellow *oddmeisters,* Jeunet and Caro (of *Delicatessen* and *The City of Lost Children* fame). Don't be put off by the four-hour time running time – simply make sure you catch *The Kingdom* at your nearest art-house cinema as soon as possible, so that when Beeb 2 or Channel 4 finally get to show it, you can impress your mates by knowing all about it already...

A

The docs are clearly as batty as the patients in this hospital. Just don't ask for surgery; it could be fatal!

Another bizarre inhabitant of *The Kingdom*'s surreal hospital does something inexplicable with an arm...

The month in FILM

JUST THE ONE GENRE FILM THIS MONTH, PLUS NEWS ON SOME GREAT FLICKS COMING IN '96, AND THE CHARTS.

(Above) Laugh out loud as Dr Jekyll turns into his female alter ego at the most inopportune of moments. Oh stop, my aching sides...

DR JEKYLL AND MS HYDE

Production Company: **Savoy Pictures**
Director: **David Price**
Starring: **Sean Young, Tim Daly, Lysette Anthony, Harvey Fierstein**
Cert: **12**
Running time: **90 mins**
Release: **Now showing**
Text: **Nigel Floyd**

Way back in 1971, *Avengers* scriptwriter Brian Clemens penned a gruesome little picture for Hammer called *Dr Jekyll and Sister Hyde,* an intriguing variation on Robert Louis Stevenson's classic horror story, in which the good doctor's elixir transformed him into a woman. The split-personality scenario gets a much blander gender-bending twist in director David Pricer's crass, contemporary, *Carry On*-style comedy, *Dr Jekyll and Ms Hyde.*

Using journals bequeathed to him by his Victorian grandfather, luckless perfume developer Richard Jacks (Tim Daly) accidentally stumbles upon a formula which transforms him into his curvy female alter ego, Helen Hyde (Sean Young). Unfortunately, the effects have a tendency to kick in unexpectedly, and then to reverse themselves at the most inconvenient moments, which means married life, day-to-day working and routine board meetings now become fraught with potential embarrassment. And the least of Richard's problems is being taken for a closet transvestite...

Nevertheless, there *are* beneficial side effects: As Helen, he/she quickly gets in touch with his feminine side, which means that instead of the ineffectual male dork of old, he/she is now a self-confident, motivated, go-getting woman. Not only does Helen conjure up an incredible new fragrance, she also wraps the perfume company's sniffy executives around her little finger.

In a lead role originally intended for hyperactive humorist Jim Carrey, anonymous soap star Tim Daly seems trapped in a state of suspendered animation. His idea of how to act feminine is a total drag – all big hair, painted nails and exaggerated hip-swivelling. By contrast, as the ballsy Helen, Sean Young gets to wear a lot of fetching frocks with style, and look a million dollars. Trouble is, she acts like she's being paid loose change. As if by way of atonement, Yves Dubois, the token gay character played by *Torch Song Trilogy* creator Harvey Fierstein, gets the film's only mildly funny joke. Mightily perplexed by his desire for the decidedly feminine Helen Hyde, he laments: "20 years in therapy and I start liking girls!"

The only other "joke" occurs in the end titles, but 90 minutes is too long to wait for a "poodle vocal styling" credit.

D

Richard Jacks (Tim Daly) quaffs the gender-bending solution...

(Below) Gratuitous torso-revealing ahoy. It's in the script, honest...

Coming soon

Dates are subject to change (meaning you can bet your granny they *will* change), but they're correct at the time of going to press...

Johnny Mnemonic **9 Feb**
Still an unconfirmed opening date, but Fox insist that it won't end up as straight-to-video fodder.

Loch Ness **9 Feb**
Ted Danson stars alongside Henson-created Nessies in a movie that's more *Local Hero* than *Three Men and a Sea Serpent.*

Jumanji **16 Feb**
An American kid gets trapped in a mystic board game, only to escape 26 years later as Robin Williams. But that's not the only horror that escapes into the real world...

Lawnmower Man 2 **27 March**
Even more cyberspace, net-related hokum. At least it's a sequel to the film that started all this nonsense.

Strange Days **March**
With the epidemic of roaming-opening-dates spreading, this Cameron/Bigelow action thriller could be a historical epic by the time we get to see it.

Twelve Monkeys **March**
Terry Gilliam's vision of David *(Blade Runner)* Peoples' script is as spectacularly idiosyncratic as we've come to expect from the man behind the superb *Brazil.*

Hackers/Connected **26 April**
By the time *Hackers* get released in the UK it could be called *Connected* instead. But with no stars, it's going to be a sod for the marketing people.

SF Movie Box Office

Nobody Does It Better!

Congratulations, Mr Bond. You have leapt athletically to the top of the SFX Film Chart, helped, no doubt, by your rocket-powered $26 million US opening weekend and the cunning $3.5 million UK opening weekend hidden inside your wristwatch. However, the amazing computer-generated family film ***Toy Story*** has opened with $29 million in three days, eclipsing even you, 007. Note also the presence of Eddie Murphy's horror film ***Vampire in Brooklyn***, and the astounding tenacity of Kevin Costner's submersible opus. Your move, Mr Bond...

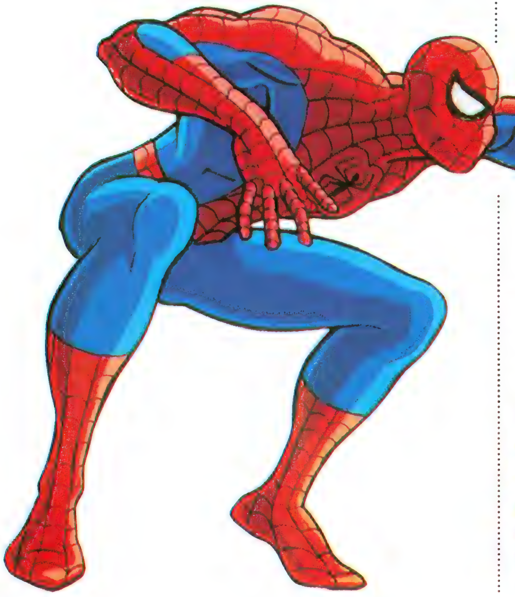
The SFXclusive Worldwide Top Ten SF Films

1 **GoldenEye (US/UK)** UIP
2 **Mortal Kombat** (US) New Line
3 **Toy Story** (US) Buena Vista
4 **Apollo 13** (US) Universal
5 **Powder** (US) Buena Vista
6 **Vampire in Brooklyn** (US) MGM
7 **Species** (US) UIP
8 **The Santa Clause** (US) Buena Vista
9 **Waterworld** (US) Universal
10 **The Net** (US) Columbia

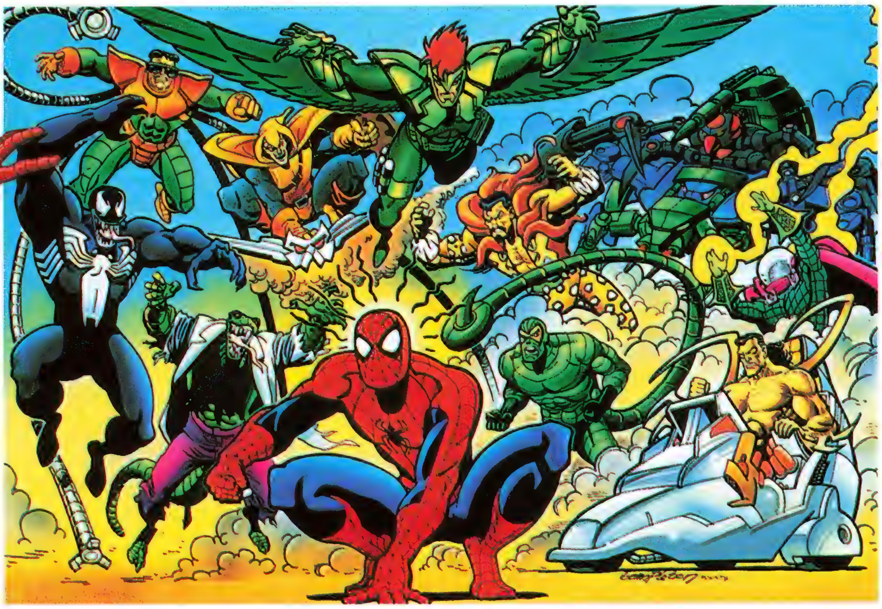
"It may not have the wit or the atmosphere of the *Batman* series, but it's certainly more intelligent than kid-vid fodder like *Captain Planet* or *Prince Valiant*."

SPIDER-MAN
THE ANIMATED SERIES

All the wit and Lycra, but not quite the charm, mark out this entertaining 'toon...



"I wonder what could be setting off my spider sense? What do you mean, 'Look behind you!'?"



Production company: **Marvel Films**
Showing: **BBC 1, Saturday, 11am**
(during *Going Live*)

Text: **Dave Golder**

A few years ago, *Spider-Man: The Animated Series* would have been regarded as one of the better slices of cartoon superhero action around. But now *Batman: The Animated Series* is on the scene, everything else looks amateurish by comparison – including Spidey. It's a bit of a shame, really, because by any other measure this is a good attempt at transferring a comic character to the small screen.

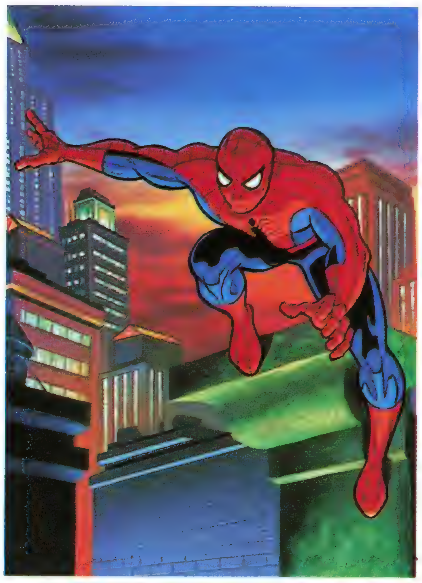
What *Spider-Man* does is do justice to its central characters. There's certainly no lack of plot, the series successfully managing to condense multi-issue epics into pacy 20 minutes segments. The danger with this, of course, is that it can make the show come across like a *Readers' Digest* abridged version of the original stories, with most of the salient points intact, but the nuances, character interaction and multi-layered plots excised. The alien *Spider-Man* costume plotline, for instance, which ran as sub-plot for years in the comics, is condensed into just three episodes here.

Another problem: Why does Peter Parker look so much like David Hasselhoff? The comic book Spidey is a lithe, supple superhero; the cartoon Spidey, by contrast, a meathead quarterback. Fortunately, his in-fight quips have been retained, and most of the villains and supporting characters are accurate to their comic counterparts. The OTT music is annoying, however – when Aunt May walks in the room, it sounds like Krakatoa has erupted.

In terms of animation, *Spider-Man* is competent enough, but the opportunity to create a unique style of movement for Spidey (who, in the best of the comics, manages to get himself into some really bizarre contortions) is totally missed. The series desperately needs something that's stylistically all its own, like *Batman* has its tell-tale dark moodiness.

All this makes *Spider-Man* sound crap, really, but it isn't at all. The show may not have the wit or the atmosphere of the *Batman* series, but it's certainly more intelligent and more entertaining than brain dead kid-vid fodder like *Captain Planet* or *Prince Valiant*. It just needs to loosen up a bit. Marvel seem to want to recreate Spidey faithfully, and they've done a good job – but now it needs a dash of spice. And a new shirt for Peter Parker. Sort out that and they'll be up into "B" territory at least...

C+



"Hmm, did I remember to re-fill my web-shooters?"

BLISS

Stop the press! Simon Shepherd *will* be returning as Sam Bliss in a full series.

Production company: **Abbey Films/Central**
Producer: **Jacky Stoller**
Starring: **Simon Shepherd, Jonathan Hyde, Jennifer Hilary, Sian Webber, Reece Dinsdale**
Showing: **Pilot episode aired in October, ITV**

Text: **Matt Bielby**

It's one of those shows that could easily sneak in under your radar – it certainly snuck in under ours. A one-shot, extra-long drama, in the style of *Inspector Morse et al, Bliss* looks, on the surface, to be yet another variation on the glossy British crime story.

Sam Bliss (Simon Shepherd of *Peak Practice*) is a Cambridge don with a teenage kid and a mission to "make science more accessible to the public" – chiefly through hosting a radio show on the subject. More interestingly, he seems to get involved in mysteries quite a lot – the one in this pilot apparently involving the murder of a girl by a high-tech vampire who uses a fully-equipped ambulance to syphon out the blood. Later on, however, *Bliss* develops into a "plucked from tomorrow's headlines" drama about a private clinic's plan to use mutated genes to halt, or reverse, the aging process. On this showing, then, it seems unlikely that *X-Files* fare will be troubling the streets of Cambridge, but more believable phenomena, like poltergeists and telekinesis, topped off with a rational explanation will be.

Bliss raked in 9.99 million viewers when it was first broadcast (making it the week's fifth most popular show, beating even *Pride and Prejudice*), which is remarkable for a one-off drama. Further episodes have been commissioned, and will appear later on in '96...

B+

LOIS & CLARK:

THE NEW ADVENTURES OF SUPERMAN: SEASON THREE

KProduction Company: **December 3rd Productions/Warner Bros**
Executive producer: **Robert Singer**
Starring: **Dean Cain, Teri Hatcher**
Showing: **Weekly in the US**

Text: **Allen Adams and Jonathan Norton**

Well, did she or didn't she? As you may recall, at the end of season two of *Lois and Clark* (or *The New Adventures of Superman,* as it's known in the UK), Clark Kent asked Lois Lane to marry him.

The answer is one you might not expect – and one you might not want to know. So if you're happier waiting until the show comes to the BBC in February, don't read on…

Okay, it's like this. Lois responds with a question of her own: "Who's asking – Clark Kent, or Superman?" Yep, after two series as "the stupidest woman in the universe," top investigative journalist Ms Lane has finally cottoned on. Indeed, she seems smart enough to realise what she'd be letting herself in for if she agreed to become "Mrs Last Son of Krypton" – and so leaves Clark/Supes dangling, saying that she'll need to think it over.

And think it over she does. Meanwhile, each week's mortal danger prompts soul-searching on our hero's part too. Seeing as being around him is so dangerous and all, is it really fair to continue with their relationship, for instance? (Of course, what Clark's failed to realised is that Lois is such a dope, she'd have got herself killed long ago if Superman hadn't been around to help her out, supervillains or no.)

The third season of *Lois and Clark*, then, centres on the most on/off engagement in history. By the third episode, "Contact" – which involves a scientist kidnapping and brainwashing Lois – Clark has broken off the engagement. But then, when an old flame of Lois's shows up in "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling," he immediately becomes jealous, and it's almost back on again. And by "A Chip Off the Old Clark" – in which a boy is imbued with Supe's powers after lightning hits his plane – Clark is virtually proffering the engagement ring...

You might be beginning to suspect that this on/off stuff must be wearing a bit thin by now, and it is. A bit. Fortunately, individual episodes manage to distract attention away from the *déjà vu* of it all. Special mention must be made of Jonathan (Riker) Frakes and his real-life partner, Genie Francis, in "Don't Tug on Superman's Cape," who play a sickeningly rich couple forever chasing rare and unique items – and now they want Superman's cape! Another standout episode is "Ultra Woman," in which Superman powers are transferred to Lois, who swiftly becomes Ultra Woman!

So the third season is going over old ground, then, but the audience seems to like it that way, and the US ratings are still healthy. It would seem safe therefore to ignore rumours that the series will transfer to cable in 1997 – it's hard to imagine ABC letting such a successful show escape without a fight...

B

Season three of *Lois and Clark* sees a not so subtle shift in the relationship between Supes, Kent and Lane.

Rian Hughes

The month in TV

What's hot and what's grot in this month's TV, along with Coming Soon, and a new, improved top five for terrestrial and satellite channels.

STAR TREK PILE-UP

For the first time ever, a British terrestrial channel is showing three flavours of Trek *a week...*

Production company: **Paramount**
Starring: **William Shatner, Patrick Stewart, Avery Brooks (and crew)**
Showing (all on BBC 2): **Classic *Star Trek*, Sundays, 11.30am** (ish); ***The Next Generation*, Wednesdays, 6pm; *DS9*, Thursday, 6pm**

Text: **Jonathan Davies**

As the result of a tri-stational scheduling proximity anomaly, the commanding officers of the NCC-1701A, NCC-1701D and Deep Space Nine find their positions switched. As each captain tries to adapt to a new ship and crew, a way must be found to restore normality. Meanwhile, Picard is in for a surprise when Lwaxana Troi makes an unexpected visit to the Enterprise...

(The slightly dated bridge of the old USS Enterprise)
Sisko: But I hardly touched it. It just came off in my hand.
Spock: It is evidently the case, captain, that the 20th century maxim "They don't build 'em like they used to" cannot be applied to Star Fleet vessels.
Sisko: What?
Spock: I was being ironic, sir.
Sisko: "Ironic"? What's that?
Mitchell: *(Running in)* Oh no. Following our badly-animated collision with that purple light just now, I appear to be developing inexplicable psycho-kinetic powers.
Sisko: Who are you?
Dr Dana: Me too. This will inevitably culminate in a crudely-choreographed fist-fight on some sort of hastily-constructed polystyrene set, masquerading as a commentary on the human condition.
Sisko: Eh? "Dr Dana"? What happened to Bones?
Mitchell: Ah, you see, we're only in this second pilot episode, which for some reason the BBC is showing out of sequence. But it's all right – we get killed off before the end. *(He suddenly attacks Sisko.)*
Sisko: Get off me. (They fall through a piece of cardboard scenery into the studio next door, where *Fantasy Island* is being filmed)
Herve Villechaize: De plane! De plane!

(The control room of Deep Space Nine.)
Picard: So what you're trying to say is, we just sit here?
O'Brien: Yes, sir.
Picard: We can't even move forwards a tiny bit?
O'Brien: No, sir.
Picard: Not even just, say, this much?
O'Brien: No, sir.
Picard: And, um, then what?
Dr Bashir: Well, sometimes something comes through the wormhole. Like, a spaceship...
Kira: Or the ventilation system might go wrong.
Dr Bashir: And – yes – there's also a bar.
Kira: And some nice shops.
Odo: Er...
Quark: In fact, here comes a spaceship now. It probably contains some new lifeform from the other side of the galaxy, which one of us will obviously have to befriend.
O'Brien: How about me? I haven't done much for a couple of episodes.
Kira: Neither have I.
Dr Bashir: Nor me.
Odo: Me neither.
Picard: Oh dear.

(The sparklingly '90s bridge of the new Enterprise.)
Troi: Eurch. Get away from me.
Kirk: But don't you want me to introduce you to the human emotion known as – love?
Data: Captain, we've found this strange device from the Gamma Quadrant. I'll just switch it on and– aarghh! *(He falls over, and gets up again a short while later)* I appear to have developed the strange ability to dream. What can this mean?
Riker: That you can dream?
Data: Oh yes. Um. What now?
Kirk: Don't know.
Worf: Would it help if I discovered that my father was possibly still alive?
Data: A bit, maybe.
Worf: And then we could, well, erm...
Kirk: Right. There's nothing else for it.
Troi: Get off, you creep.
Worf: Take *that!*
Kirk: Gagh.
Data: Oof.
Worf: Urgh.

Star Fleet's destruction seems assured. But, just in the nick of time, they sort everything out by re-routing a sub-atomic alpha particle beam through the main deflector array, or something like that.
See you next week.

A-

HERE COME THE MUNSTERS

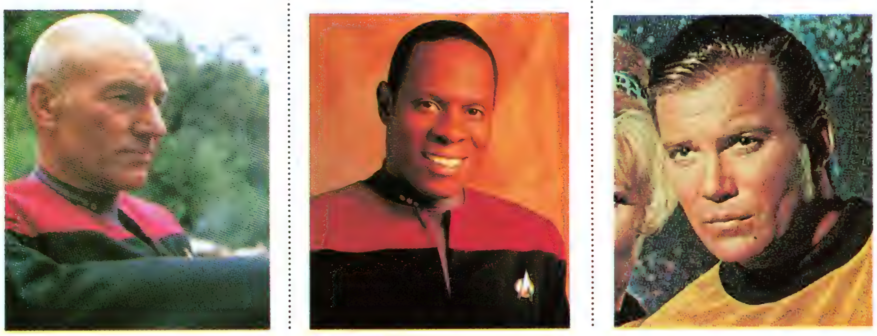
Production Company: **MTE/Bodega Bay/St. Claire Entertainment/Fox Broadcasting**
Director: **Robert Ginty**
Starring: **Edward Herrmann, Veronica Hamel, Robert Morse, Christine Taylor**
Showing: **US TV one-off movie, 31 October**
Text: **Stephen Jones**

This likeable TV movie, co-executive produced by John Landis, recounts a new origin story for the Munster family, some 30 years after the original series was aired.

Despite the disappointing script and low budget, actor-turned-director Robert Ginty ensures that the film looks superb, the stars all fit perfectly into their roles, and the character make-up effects are remarkably re-created by Steve Johnson's XFX company. There is also fun support from Mary Woronov as a prying neighbour, and cameos by original cast members Yvonne De Carlo, Al Lewis, Butch Patrick and Pat Priest as a weird family eating in a restaurant.

Fans of the first series won't be disappointed.

C+



It's the bald one, the bald one and the, erm, bald one. All captains are bald, but some are more bald than others.

Coming soon

The Sci Fi Channel must be doing something right, judging by Sky's decision to do a major SF movie season spread over three of its channels – Sky Movies, The Movie Channel, Sky Movies Gold. They'll be showing one SF movie a day throughout January, and highlights include: ***Abel Ferrara's Body Snatchers*** (3 Jan), ***Aliens – The Director's Cut*** (5 Jan), ***The Day the Earth Stood Still*** (14 Jan), ***Demolition Man*** (17 Jan), **Android** (19 Jan), ***Scanner Cop*** (25 Jan), ***Spacehunter: Adventures in the Forbidden Zone*** (29 Jan) and ***Barbarella*** (30 Jan).

The Green Hornet
Bravo Weekdays, 7.30pm, Jan
From the people who brought you the '60s *Batman,* the series that looks exactly like *Batman,* but a bit greener. And Bruce Lee's in it.

Automan
Bravo Tue. 6pm, Sat. 8pm, Jan
One of the most awful SF TV series ever. But watch one for a laugh.

Sliders
Sky One 20 Jan, 7pm
Starting off with the two-hour pilot episode, *Sliders* then moves to a regular 8pm slot every Saturday.

Lois and Clark: The New Adventures of Superman
BBC 1 Feb
Season three hits terrestrial TV!

Space: Above & Beyond
Sky One March
Now officially confirmed by Sky to be starting in March.

SF TV Top Fives

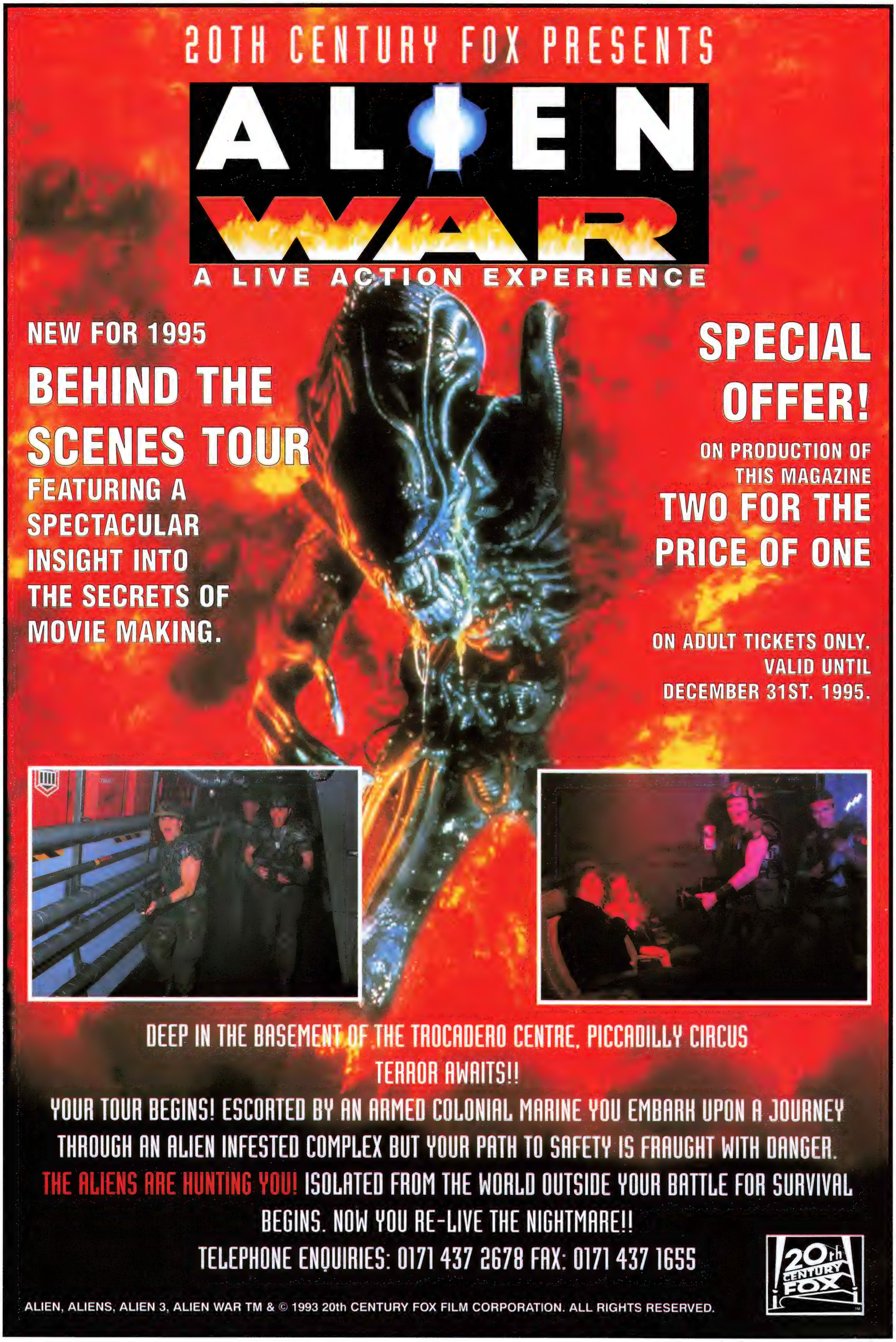
A change of format his month. From now on, we'll be printing an individual top five chart for satellite and terrestrial formats, rather than a combined top ten (which, let's fact it, has been getting samey of late). This issue we've got Bravo, but next month we'll have Sky, and after that the Sci Fi Channel. Can't say fairer than that...

The SFXclusive UK TV Terrestrial Top Ten Programmes

1. **The X-Files** (BBC 2)
2. **Star Trek: The Next Generation** (BBC 2)
3. **Star Trek: Deep Space Nine** (BBC 2)
4. **Space Precinct** (BBC 2)
5. **The Avengers** (Channel 4)

The SFXclusive Top Ten Programmes on Bravo

1. **The Prisoner**
2. **The New Avengers**
3. **Space: 1999**
4. **Sapphire and Steel**
5. **The Invisible Man**



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> "This is definitely faster, sharper, and less pretentious than either of Tim Burton's efforts, and it's by some way the better film."

BATMAN FOREVER

Can Kilmer, Carrey and Jones hold their own on the small screen?

Distributor: **Warner Video**
Director: **Joel Schumacher**
Starring: **Val Kilmer, Jim Carrey, Tommy Lee Jones, Nicole Kidman, Chris O'Donnell**
Cert: **PG**
Release: **Out now**
Running time: **122 mins**
Price: **£14.99**

Text: **Matt Bielby**

Chris O'Donnell's streetwise Robin (left) still looks great, but Carrey's Riddler (above-right) can get more irritating than amusing...

Goodness knows how film-makers do it, really. By the time a movie is ready for actually showing in the cinemas, the director will have seen each frame so many times he (or she) must hate the bloody thing. Being that close to their work almost certainly means that by the time it's finished they haven't got a clue whether it's actually any good or not. I kind of feel the same way about *Batman Forever*.

Admittedly, I haven't seen the film anything like as often as director Joel Schumacher, but I did catch it at the cinema three or four times (more by accident than design), and watching it on video the law of diminishing returns has definitely come into play. This remains a big, spectacular film (though, of course, a bit less impressive on the small screen). It still boasts some of the best production design ever (Gotham City, the Batmobile, Bat-cave, Batboat, Batplane, fabulous costumes...), for instance, plus some witty one-liners, and a couple of scenery chewing performances, most noticeably Jim Carrey as the film-stealing Riddler. It's nicely handled by Schumacher too, with just about the right blend of straight-faced camp and over-the-top action – and although I don't think the fight scenes are as badly handled and confusing as

JUDGE DREDD

Distributor: **Fox Guild**
Director: **Danny Cannon**
Starring: **Sylvester Stallone, Rob Schneider, Armand Assante, Max Von Sydow**
Cert: **15**
Release: **Out now** (rental)
Running time: **92 mins**

Text: **Stephen Applebaum**

J*udge Dredd* is a mess, but you couldn't really have expected anything more from neophyte director Danny Cannon. After all, the precocious Brit had only one feature film to his name, the mediocre thriller *The Young Americans*, when – unbelievably – he was chosen to take on the challenge of bringing *2000AD's* cold-fish cop to the screen in a big budget Hollywood blockbuster. There was nothing in *The Young Americans* to suggest he could handle such a major project, and, predictably enough, his inexperience shows through.

***That* kiss (top left) had *Dredd* fans miffed, but Mean Machine (right) pleased, and Rico (above) was okay.**

For most of the time, Cannon is at sea with his screenplay. As was the case with *The Young Americans*, he's been lumbered with a script that seems incomplete – the plot staggers around with all the coherence and direction of some drunk geezer at a rave in Dagenham. And while Cannon manages to bring a strong visual sense to the material, he never quite succeeds in concealing the film's blatant lack of substance...

So, despite some superb sets and accomplished effects, *Judge Dredd* is less than the sum of its parts – quite some achievement when one of those parts is Sylvester Stallone. His insistence on giving Dredd emotions turns the character into yet another stock action hero, and one that fades into the background all too quickly.

If Cannon and Stallone had stuck to the original concept from the comic, they might at least have made a movie that pleased *Dredd* fans. This, though, will bore general audiences and *2000AD* devotees alike.

C-

---

popular opinion has it, I can certainly see why some might consider the action a little confusing at times.

What I'm not really sure about now, however, is if it's really *that* satisfying a film. Val Kilmer's Batman, which I originally thought a good and subtle performance, made little impression this time around; Carrey started to get annoying in a way he hadn't before; and the cackling Tommy Lee Jones as Two-Face seemed to get a lot more screen time than I remembered. Chris O'Donnell's tough, streetwise Robin still looked good, though, and Michael Gough's Alfred the butler remained brilliant – put him in a proper confrontation with the Riddler, I kept thinking, and even Jim Carrey might have had trouble stealing the scene.

So what am I sure about? Well, that this *is* definitely faster, sharper, and less pretentious than either of Tim Burton's *Batman* efforts, and by some way the better film. What I don't think any more – as I did the first time around – is that it's the best superhero film ever made. Really, *Batman Forever* can't hold a candle to the best of Christopher Reeve's Man of Steel efforts, *Superman 2* in particular, for entertainment value. Chris Reeve you remember, particularly in Clark Kent guise, was a great character; Batman and Bruce Wayne remain cardboard cut-outs. Despite all the spectacle, and its valiant efforts to humanise Batman, I'm now left wondering just how history will regard it...

B+

The redesigned Batmobile, all fiery exhaust fumes and wobbly fins, still looks great, even on TV.

TERMINAL FORCE

"Wake up, we've got some more running around and shooting to do."

Distributor: **Columbia Tristar Home Video**
Director: **William Mesa**
Starring: **Brigitte Nielsen, Richard Moll, Craig Fairbrass**
Cert: **15**
Release: **10 January** (rental)
Running time: **87 mins**

Text: **MJ Simpson**

An impressive opening sequence on an alien planet, in which small spaceships strafe fleeing civilians, introduces Richard Moll *(Night Court)* as Kyler, *Terminal Force's* chief bad guy. Up against him are Craig Fairbrass *(London's Burning, Cliffhanger)*, leader of a band of peaceful refugees,and his cowardly sidekick Sam Raimi. When both the good guys are rapidly dispatched, Craig manages, with his dying words, to tell his sister Ladera (Nielsen) that the all-important "Fire Crystal" stolen by Kyler isn't the only one in existence – there is another, on planet Earth.

Evil Tyler (Richard Moll, above) is chasing good Ladera (Brigitte Nielsen, right). We wouldn't want to tangle with either of them, quite frankly...

It's all an excuse, of course, to get Nielsen over here, and into a quest, with the aid of Indiana Jones-alike John H Brennan, to nab the crystal before Kyler gets his hands on it. As the mob are after Brennan, and the cops are after everybody, all hell, understandably, breaks loose.

It would be misleading to suggest that *Terminal Force* is science fiction – this really has more in common with Tolkien-esque fantasy than SF. There's no attempt to explain precisely why the crystal is important, or what it's doing on Earth – but these aren't failings as such, since such explanations aren't part of the film's *raison d'être*. No, what we have here is an unashamedly derivative, surprisingly enjoyable science fantasy action movie, with plenty of spaceships, robots, rayguns and explosions.

When so many current low budget sci-fi movies are nothing but mindless kickboxing cyborgs *ad nauseum*, it's refreshing to find a video like this, which harks back to the cheap 'n' cheerful intergalactic shenanigans of *Metalstorm, Ice Pirates* and other post-*Empire Strikes Back* quickies.

C+

IDSTOP
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Hughes

© Rian Hughes

The month in VIDEO

The latest video releases reviewed and rated – curl up in front the fire and have a festive video night in!

BLUE THUNDER

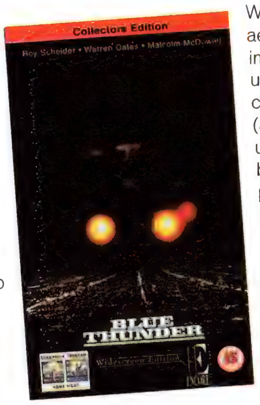
Encore Entertainment/
Widescreen plus trailer

Director: **John Badham**
Starring: **Roy Scheider, Malcolm McDowell**
Price: **£12.99**
Released: **Out now**
Running time: **108 mins**
Text: **Dave Golder**

With hindsight, it's hard to believe *Blue Thunder* was originally conceived as a movie, and not merely as a pilot for the derisory TV series. Coming across like an idea in search of a plot, only the fact that Scheider destroys the eponymous helicopter at the end suggests the big screen version was ever intended to be a self-contained entity.

The idea, of course, is, "Let's do a movie about a hi-tech helicopter with really *big* guns." The plot that's constructed on this premise is woefully predictable, and especially disappointing as it comes from *Dark Star* and *Alien* scripter Dan O'Bannon. Scheider is the airborne LA cop suffering from Vietnam flashback syndrome, and given the task of testing a new hi-tech chopper, Blue Thunder. During manoeuvres, he uncovers a plot involving an old arch enemy from his 'Nam days, McDowell. Unfortunately, his superiors don't believe him, so he steals Blue Thunder in an attempt to expose the culprits, and ends up destroying half of LA in the process.

John *(TimeCop)* Badham directs the action pacily enough, and in Widescreen the aeronautics look impressive. But the unsympathetic characters (Scheider and co use the chopper to become hi-tech peeping toms, basically), and cliché-strewn script pull it down massively. The helicopter itself is a bloody ugly chunk of metal, anyway.



C

"If that's the Monster of Peladon I'm a *clichéd* plot device."

DOCTOR WHO: MONSTER OF PELADON

BBC Video

Cert: **U**
Director: **Lennie Mayne**
Starring: **Jon Pertwee, Elisabeth Sladen**
Release: **27 December**
Running time: **140 mins**
Price: **£19.99**
Text: **Andrew Osmond**

BBC
DOCTOR WHO
THE MONSTER OF PELADON
Starring JON PERTWEE
DOUBLE VIDEO PACK

"If miners take up arms to protect their rights, they probably have their reasons," Pertwee pronounces in this 1974 story, screened in the wake of a real-life face-off between the miners' union and Edward Heath. Don't expect any radical lefty *Who* story, however. This is turgid stuff, with a plot that's secondary to a surfeit of corridor Olympics.

It starts well enough, with the Doctor, accompanied by Sarah, returning to a semi-civilised Peladon (last seen in 1972's "Curse of..." guess where), only to find that his efforts to lift the planet from barbarism have had less than rosy consequences.

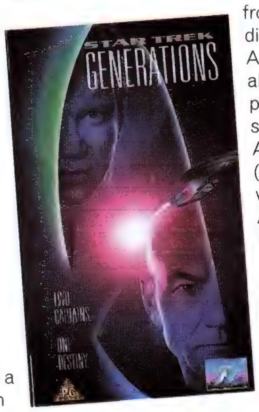
Now part of a Galactic Federation, Peladon is at war with the never-seen Galaxy 5, its workforce co-opted to mine local minerals. Against this background, an ancient ghost haunts the caverns, picking off hapless miners. It's up to the Doctor to debunk the spook (in true *Scooby Doo* fashion), and find the real rubber-suited menace before it's too late.

The set-up is intriguing, especially the idea of the Doctor having to face the consequences of his past meddlings, but the story is too thin to support six episodes. Ideas get buried. Padding is pumped in to fill out the baggy duvet of a plot. Much of the set-bound action amounts to capture and escape routines and tunnel runabouts, punctuated with some of the most leaden battles in BBC history.

But while the stripey-wigged yokel locals take dullness to depths unexplored by *Roughnecks,* the show is a feast for '70s aliens junkies. As well as some seemingly tranquillized Ice Warriors and the star turn from A.L.F.'s distant cousin, Aggedor, you also get the phallically-shaped octopod Alpha Centauri (piercingly voiced by ex-Archer, Ysanne Churchman) and the half-masked Vega Nexus. Even Pertwee looks bored with it all...

C

"You try putting in contact lenses with claws like these."



STAR TREK: GENERATIONS

CIC

Cert: **PG**
Director: **David Carson**
Starring: **Patrick Stewart, Jonathan Frakes, Brent Spinner, Michael Dorn, Malcolm McDowell** and **William Shatner**
Release: **27 December**
Running time: **113 mins**
Price: **£14.99**
Text: **Trenton Webb**

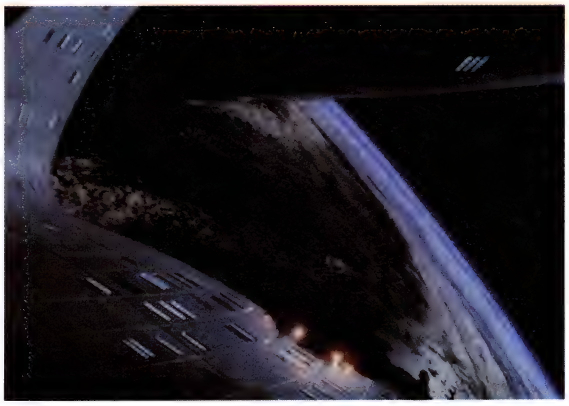
***Generations* boldly pushed the format too far by taking the *Star Trek: The Next Generation* TV show to the cinema. A flabby mix of (admittedly excellent) special effects and over-elaboration, it seemed to lose something by freeing the show from the restrictions imposed by the ad hungry US TV format – the characters appeared inflated, and the script too long for its own good.**

Curiously enough, though, *Generations* actually works on video. It loses some of its sfx grandeur, sure, but essentially the two-dimensional interpersonal dramas that made the original show such a hit, and which the film also has in spades, seem best suited to the small screen. It just *feels* right.

Looked upon as an particularly expensive end-of-season double-length episode, *Generations* rates as good – but not brilliant – *Next Generation* fare. It's kept from the "excellent" class occupied by the likes of "The Best of Both Worlds" and "All Good Things" by its lack of a powerful, original storyline, and the desire to mix up "classic" and *Next Gen* characters, resulting in the inevitable excess of lead roles, and an air of awkward unease as Scotty and co. dutifully work through their cameos.

An essential addition to any *TNG* collection, then, but I doubt it'll become a favourite – although the fact you get to see Kirk die twice is worth the asking price...

B-



***Generations:* Boldly going in search of answers to the plot holes.**

Take our advice – make sure this is the most you ever see of *Grid Runners*.

GRID RUNNERS

Entertainment in Video (ho ho)

Cert: **18**
Director: **Andrew Stevens**
Starring: **Don "The Dragon" Wilson, Athena Massey, Stella Stevens, Loren Avedon**
Release: **Out now** (rental)
Running time: **87 mins**
Text: **Matt Bielby**

This has to have been one of the longest 87 minutes of my life. Make no mistake – *Grid Runners,* a sort of kung fu/SF crossbreed, with a smattering of *Playboy*-style sex – is truly dreadful; one of the worst films I've seen in my entire life. Blatantly ripping off the plot of the yet-to-be-released *Virtuosity* wholesale (virtual reality baddies from a near future VR game come to life through a mad scientist's machinations, and set about terrorising a near-future Las Vegas), it's brain-dead, poorly shot, appallingly acted, and just, well, shit.

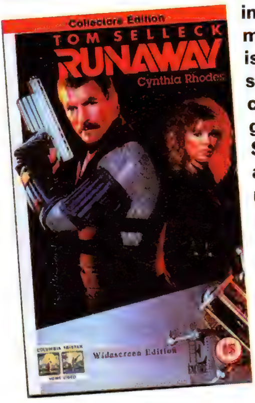
And it's not as if the fighting's any good either. Sure, there are a lot of scraps – they throw one in every time the plot threatens to grind to a halt – but they're all terribly choreographed and poorly motivated. Two points of interest: Michael Dorn does a computer voiceover (hope you got paid well for this one, Mike), and there's an almost funny reference to "the republic of England." Other than that, avoid.

D-

RUNAWAY

Encore Entertainment

Cert: **15**
Director: **Michael Crichton**
Starring: **Tom Selleck, Cynthia Rhodes, Gene Simmons, Kirstie Alley**
Release: **Out now**
Running time: **100 mins**
Price: **£12.99**
Text: **MJ Simpson**

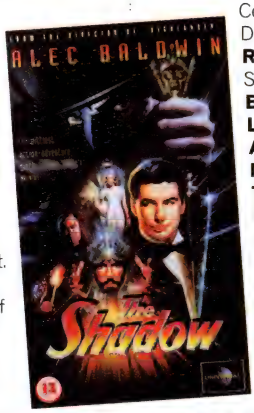


This is a seriously *average* movie. Selleck is a cop who deals with runaway robots, and Rhodes is his new partner. Together they have to save people trapped by malfunctioning machines. The trouble is, although explaining this takes up the first half of the movie, it's entirely incidental to the main plot, which is basically a standard thriller concerning bad guy Gene Simmons' attempts to retrieve some silicon chip templates.

The only commendable aspect of *Runaway* is the design. The robots are mostly functionally-designed boxes-on-wheels rather than silly androids, and the future painted by the film is not that much different from today. Ignoring his current Licence to Print Money *(Jurassic Park, Disclosure, etc.),* there was a time when having Michael Crichton on a project actually meant something. In classics like *Westworld* and *The Andromeda Strain,* for instance, there was a single, scary threat which built towards a climax; *Runaway* has no such central threat. Only a few imaginative uses of the Widescreen format hint at Crichton's involvement.

Ultimately, there's nothing much here to get your teeth into – no deep or interesting characters, and not much of a plot. It's not terrible, sure, but then it's not brilliant either...

C



THE SHADOW

CIC

Cert: **12**
Director: **Russell Mulcahy**
Starring: **Alec Baldwin, John Lone, Penelope Anne Miller, Ian McKellern, Tim Curry**
Release: **27 December**
Running time: **103 mins**
Price: **£10.99**
Text: **Trenton Webb**

Neat plot twists, a wonderfully vicious ending and tepid performances mingle in this diverting – but never riveting – superhero yarn.

Filthy rich socialite and reformed drug dealer Lamont

Alec Baldwin with a big (silly looking) prosthetic nose is *The Shadow*.

KANGAROO SEX!

Girls just wanna have fun... But does it *have* to be at the expense of the audience?

TANK GIRL

MGM/UA Home Video

Cert: **15**
Director: **Rachel Talalay**
Starring: **Lori Petty**
Release: **Out now** (rental)
Running time: **104 mins**
Text: **Matt Bielby**

It hardly seems like five minutes ago that we were arguing about whether or not *Tank Girl* deserved to be SFX's first cover star – and here she is on video. And quite the laggard she is too – all the other theatrical releases covered in our *première* issue are already available to rent.

This is a decidedly odd film that we couldn't make a clear-cut decision about at the time, and eight months or so down the line hasn't made it any easier. Every so often our office copy gets lent out, the borrower brings it back and says, "That was crap," and it's hard to disagree. But then someone else gives it and go and afterwards says, "You know, I really enjoyed that," and you think, "Great, 'cos we kind of enjoyed it too." Confusing, isn't it?

The star of the film. And Lori Petty, as Tank Girl, next to her.

The "what a load of crap" camp have much on their side. *Tank Girl* – based, of course, on the cult British comic character – has bugger all plot, variable production values (some bits look impressive; others like the money simply ran out), strives to be wacky, yet fails at least half the time, and is strangely unsexy. Much of it comes across as a desperate shambles.

But that's not the whole story. The film has a fair few things on its side, too, including a daffy central performance from Petty as Tank Girl herself, the rather tasty Naomi Watts as her buddy, Jet Girl, and a deliciously over-the-top bad guy turn from Malcolm McDowell, looking like he walked right off the set of *Star Trek: Generations.* The Sam Winston designed mutant kangaroo/human crossbreeds (including a semi-recognisable Ice-T) are great too, though they appear too late into the film. Other odd moments, like the deliciously bonkers Busby Berkeley dance routine, also arrive too late, sadly. A right hotch-potch, then, but definitely worth a punt for a night's rental.

C+

The month in VIDEO

Cranston takes on the '30s underworld armed only with the ability to "cloud men's minds..." Oh, and two pearl-handled Colt 45s. All's going swimmingly until a descendant of Genghis Khan slips into super-villain mode and appears to be the Shadow's "clouding men's minds" match.

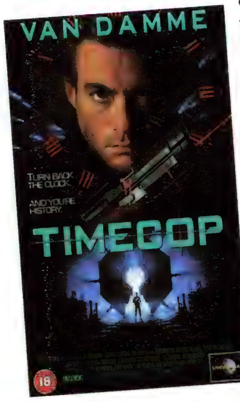
An eclectic assortment of cameos, computer graphics and comic book logic, *The Shadow* lacks coherence, and never seems entirely sure how seriously it should take itself. At the cinema, the visual effects disguised many of the gaping plot holes, but they lose their power on video, and the faults shimmer all too clearly into view. As a superhero movie *The Shadow* isn't bad, but as a "real movie" it's a patchy affair that soon demands the intervention of a certain Mr FFWD.

C+

TIMECOP

CIC

Cert: **18**
Director: **John Badham**
Starring: **Jean-Claude** (I'm a serious actor) **Van Damme, Ron Silver, Mia Sara**
Release: **2 January**
Running time: **94 mins**
Price: **£13.99**
Text: **Dave Golder**



If the plot inconsistencies in *Star Trek: Generations* made your blood boil, give *TimeCop* a wide margin. Time travel movies are always fraught with logic problems, but *TimeCop* doesn't even bother staying consistent to the rules it sets up for itself.

As Van Damme flits about the time lines trying to prevent temporal crime, you can't help wonder whether he's not doing more harm than good. He certainly inflicts enough damage on just about everyone else in the movie...

Still, if you can put your brain into neutral, the action is deftly handled, there are some impressively gory deaths, and a few of the gags raise a smile. *TimeCop* is a film of well-made, exciting action set pieces badly strung together, and director Badham at least makes the thing look half decent. You just wish they'd given the script to someone with half a brain to read through before they shot it. Not, of course, that Van Damme fans will mind *too* much...

C

WILLOW

Encore Entertainment
Widescreen plus trailer

Cert: **PG**
Director: **Ron Howard**
Starring: **Warwick Davis, Val Kilmer, Jean Marsh, Patricia Hayes, Billy Barty**
Release: **Out now**
Price: **£12.99**
Running time: **110 mins**
Text: **Dave Golder**

Incredible as it may seem, *Willow* is a mere eight years old. You don't think that's incredible? You obviously haven't seen the film recently. Without resorting to reading the copyright small print on the video sleeve, you'd probably date it some time around 1976. And that's despite the fact it contains some of the earliest examples of computer morphing in a major cinema release.

For a George Lucas movie, this looks horrifically

Now, that's just showing off, Jean-Claude.

ANOMALOUS

STAR TREK VOYAGER 1.10

CIC Video

Cert: **PG**
Directors: **Kim Friedman** ("Twisted"); **Jim Conway** ("The 37s")
Starring: **Kate Mulgrew, Robert Picardo, Robert Beltran, Sharon Lawrence**
Release: **Out now**
Running time: **88 mins**
Price: **£12.99**
Text: **Clive Parker**

Whoopee doo, another spatial anomaly story. Haven't had one of those since, oooh, the last video. But wait, the anomaly in "Twisted" is different. Well, slightly... It alters the layout of the ship so that everyone gets lost. Meanwhile, Neelix returns to his most irritating form in a terrible sub-plot dealing with his jealousy over Kes having fun with the decidedly flirtatious Tom Paris. By the end of the show, you can't help thinking it's a shame Neelix doesn't get lost for good.

"Don't look now, captain, but I think we've encountered yet another cheap plot device."

"The 37s" bears a remarkable similarity to the *Star Trek: The Next Generation* episode, "The Neutral Zone."

Technobabble takes over the dialogue, rendering it almost incomprehensible to the casual viewer, and hard going even for Trekkers. I'll let you find out for yourself how they solve the problem – but I can tell you right now that you won't like it. Still, at least the doctor gets a good line in, when he exclaims in exasperation, "I'm a doctor, not a bartender!"

In "The 37s," Voyager comes across a trail of rust, which leads it to a 1936 Ford pick-up floating in space. The engine and radio both work (after 400 years in a vacuum?) and there's still some horseshit in the back of the truck, probably an unsubtle reference to the previous episode.

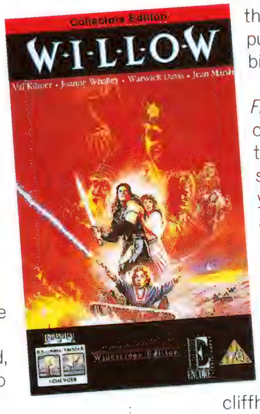
The radio picks up a signal which leads the ship to a nearby planet, but – due to an outbreak of severe technobabble – the crew can use neither shuttles nor the transporter. So they land the whole ship. Yes, really. The Voyager actually touches down on the planet (risking the entire craft, as everyone claims never to have attempted the procedure before) on a whim – a particularly dodgy procedure since the spindly delicate landing gear doesn't look as though it would support a cranefly, let alone an entire starship. It's also particularly odd how an old-fashioned AM radio signal manages to scythe through the atmospheric interference, when a trillion times more advanced systems aboard the Voyager can't.

But back to the "plot." Cryogenic chambers are found containing frozen, living humans abducted by aliens in 1937 – shades of *The X-Files* here, but then maybe that was the plan – and the crew of the Voyager have to make an important decision about their future in the Delta Quadrant. While the basic plot of "The 37s" is full of gaping holes, some reasonable acting and great effects just about rescue it from severe dullness. (That, and the superb bit where Janeway's hair miraculously reassembles itself when an errant lock flops out unintentionally...)

C

cheap... Some of the dodgy monster effects make you cry out for Ray Harryhausen to come out of retirement, and the optical effects are serviceable at best. On the production side of things, nothing is ever anything more than competent – in fact, things are often distinctly lacklustre. And for what is ostensibly an action film, the so-called action sequences lack any sense of dynamism.

What all this means is that there's little in the film to distract you from its fantasy-by-numbers plot and hammy acting. Hobbit substitutes are the heroes in what amounts to a tired tale of an evil witch-queen gunning for a baby named as her nemesis in a prophecy. Though it all rattles along at the kind of rate that might keep the interest of an undemanding child, there's little here to liven up the humdrum-ness permeating every level of production. Only Val Kilmer's Oscar-winning gusto in the face of severe tedium, and the sporadically witty dialogue – about the only thing in the movie to make any concessions to the hip knowingness of the '80s – register on the plus side.



From the man who gave us *Star Wars* and *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, you expect something spectacular, but what *Willow* offers is really only one rung up the ladder from *At the Earth's Core*.

C-

THE X-FILES: THE UNOPENED FILE

Fox Video

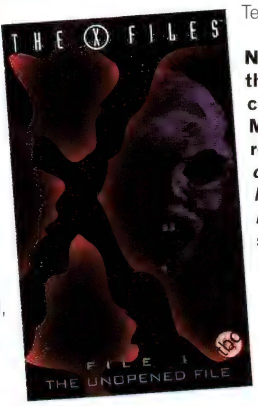
Director: **Rob Bowman**
Starring: **David Duchovny, Gillian Anderson**
Cert: **12**
Running time: **135 mins**
Available: **15 January**
Price: **£14.99**
Text: **Jonathan Norton**

Ten out of ten to Fox Video for marketing. They might have annoyed fans by discontinuing their chronological releases of *The X-Files* episodes on video earlier this year (they'll start releasing them again – from the very first episode again, bizarrely – in early '97) but you can't help feeling that the scheme they've dreamt up for '96 is going to result in some pretty major sales.

Agents Sculder and Mully in yet another tough FBI pose...

The plan is to release four feature-length "video movies" compiled from various episodes (see this issue's Strange Tales for the full details, starting on page 4), and to support these with all kinds of related paraphernalia to ensure that each release is a real "event."

So, to kick things off, they've managed to pull off probably the biggest coup of all... *The Unopened File,* you see, contains episodes that haven't been shown in the UK yet, either on satellite or terrestrial TV – the first two episodes of season three. These have been spliced together, along with the season two cliffhanger. The result works surprisingly well, viewed as one complete two-hour plus "movie," although admittedly you expect adverts to pop up every few minutes or so. And it's a bit of a shame that *that* cliffhanger (with Mulder trapped in a burning boxcar) isn't a cliffhanger anymore. Perhaps you could switch off the video for a couple of hours at this point to get the right atmosphere. Or perhaps not...



It helps that these episodes, featuring possibly *The X-Files'* most involved government-cover-up-paranoia-trip-style storyline yet, are superb examples of the show at its best – tense, exciting, edgy, well-written and even action-packed (well, maybe not *packed,* but certainly comfortably filled-out)... Chris Carter manages to squeeze in just about every conspiracy theory and alien weirdy happening incident he can think of into a plot that makes the word labyrinthine look a bit redundant. (See SFX7 for a full review of the TV episodes.)

The editing together of the episodes is competent, and at first glance, there seems to be no major material missing. Of course, completists will moan about the lack of credits (I remember the days when *Doctor Who* stories used to be edited together into one block and *Whovians* were up in arms too – the BBC soon relented). But Fox don't have to worry about that too much. After all, they're shamelessly trying to reach out to a wider audience here.

And with trailers like the one for the next *X-Files* vid, "Tooms," (which is tacked to the end of *The Unopen File)* opting for the major motion picture-style approach, complete with gravel-toned voice-over and slick effects, they may just manage to pull it off. These, they would have us believe, are more than just your common or garden cult TV video releases...

So, *The Unopen File* is a quality product. No doubt about it. But, at the end of the day, it's still a bit of a marketing trick. Yes, it'll work, and, yes, it'll make Fox loads of dosh. But you can't help feeling that the hardcore fans are being taken for a ride. Not an unpleasant ride, admittedly, and one they'll doubtlessly sign up for, but a ride nonetheless.

B+

ZERAM

Manga Video Live

Cert: **18**
Director: **Keita Amemiya**
Starring: **Yuko Moriyama, Kunihiko Ida, Mizuho Hoshida**
Release date: **Out now**
Running time: **97 mins**
Price: **£13.99**
Text: **MJ Simpson**

Never mind all those dodgy cartoons that Manga keep releasing *(You can deal with the hate mail, MJ – Ed)*, this is the sort of Japanese stuff I like! *Zeram* is a brilliant live-action SF flick from 1991 which was released in America in this dubbed letterbox version two years ago, so full marks to Manga for picking it up.

The plot's delightfully bizarre, but then what else do you expect from the Japanese? Two engineers from a power company are accidentally caught up in a battle between intergalactic bounty hunter Ilya and escaped bio-engineered monster Zeram. Assisted by a computer called Bob, Ilya re-directs Zeram's planned Earth-landing to an artificially constructed replica of his chosen landing site, located in another dimension, whereupon she attempts to capture him. Unfortunately, our two hapless heroes travel to this "Zone" with her (let's not get into details about exactly how this happens for sanity's sake), then find themselves trapped there with the monster for company. Yeess!

ZERAM
18
LIVE

Zeram himself is a sort of giant, walking fungus, with a little kabuki mask covering his alarmingly phallic forehead appendage, and combining the unstoppability of the Terminator with the slimy sexual symbolism of Giger's Alien. Although there are obvious homages to both films – the stand-off with a JCB is clearly influenced by *Aliens'* power-loader sequence – Zeram is sufficiently different from anything else you're likely to see to make the video worth picking up for him alone.

But there's much else to recommend Zeram too. Amid the big guns, explosions, stop-motion effects and computer graphics, the only real embarrassments are the little beasties created by Zeram from seed pod-like bombs – they resemble an unfortunate cross between ET and Harry Slime from *Avenger Penguins!*

So never mind dodgily dubbed versions of *Ghost in the Project 3 Tank A-25 Demon 1/2 15 Part 89* – let's have more films like this please, Manga! SFX suggests *Cyber Ninja* (1988), which also stars Hiroki Ida.

B

SF Video Charts

Welcome Back!

They said it couldn't be done, but Fox Video proved them wrong. You *can* re-release the ***Star Wars*** trilogy and still get people to buy them. We bet punters can't wait for the 1997 anniversary version of ***Star Wars: A New Hope.*** The most impressive new entry, however, must be ***Downtime*** – the excellent, fan-produced *Doctor Who* video, starring Nick Courtney and Lis Sladen. Let's hope that means it's been a financial success and a follow-up is on the cards...

HMV
KNOW HMV · KNOW VIDEO

The HMV SF Top 10

1 **Batman Forever** (Warner)
2 **Star Wars Box Set** (Fox)
3 **Star Wars** (Fox)
4 **Return of the Jedi** (Fox)
5 **The Empire Strikes Back** (Fox)
6 **Stargate** (Guild)
7 **Red Dwarf Smeg Outs** (BBC Video)
8 **Downtime** (Domintemporal Productions)
9 **Mortal Kombat – Journey Begins** (Sony)
10 **Street Fighter 2** (Manga)

Coming soon

All release dates are subject to change.

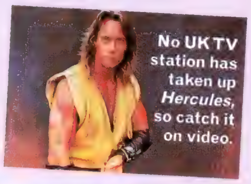
Armitage 3 - Volume 1 (Retail) **22 Jan**
Don't mention replicants! Not that we're suggesting this latest anime offering is anything like an animated *Blade Runner.* Oh no...

Destiny Turns on the Radio (Rental) **23 Jan**
Quentin T appears in, but does not direct, this bizarre, whimsical mix of *Northern Exposure* in Vegas, *Miracle on 34th Street, Twin Peaks* and *The X-Files.* Curious.

XTRO-3 (Rental) **24 Jan**
We never even realised there was *XTRO-2,* and *1* was pretty bad...

Congo (Rental) **26 Jan**
Lots of travelling across Africa and not enough killer apes. But passably fun in a brain-in-neutral kind of a way. As long as you ignore Tim Curry's accent.

Hercules 1 – The Lost Kingdom (Rental) **26 Jan**
The first of the four *Hercules* TV movies that led to the US TV series *The Legendary Journeys.* A lot more fun than you might expect.



No UK TV station has taken up *Hercules,* so catch it on video.

The Outer Limits – The Sandkings (Rental) **26 Jan**
The pilot to the recent US TV series. It seems bizarre to stick something out on rental that was on TV a few months ago, though.

Halloween 6: The Curse of Michael Myers (Rental) **30 Jan**
In which Wayne and Garth discover an ancient curse that causes them to star in a series of increasingly poor sequels.

The Prophecy (Rental) **30 Jan**
Originally filmed as *God's Army, The Prophecy* stars the cadaverous Christopher Walken as a fallen angel. Hmm...

Babylon 5 Volume 8 (Retail) **26 Feb**
Three episodes from season one, all on one tape. Can't be bad.

The Outer Limits Volume 5 (Retail) **26 Feb**
Two never-before-released-on-video episodes from the much talked about original series.

Ape trouble in *Congo,* due out on 26 January. A sort of *Greystoke: The Revenge...*

> “The most interesting part of *Richter 10* is the background against which everything takes place – a politically and socially fragile world, where corporations control governments and profit is more important than people.”

RICHTER 10

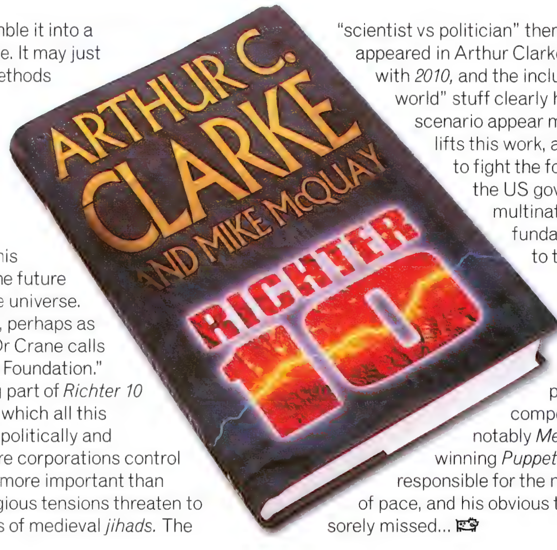
Both social and earthly unrest form the backdrop to Clarke & McQuay's newest

Authors: **Arthur C Clarke, Mike McQuay**
Publisher: **Gollancz hardback**
Price/page count: **£15.99, 336pp**
ISBN: **0-575-06116-2**

Text: **Nick Veitch**

One of the trademarks of Arthur C Clarke's SF is that it doesn't often demand that the reader make a great leap of faith. It is fiction, but not pure fantasy (maybe there *is* an obelisk on the moon). In his latest work, we're taken to the not too distant future, where ecological disasters have excited the tectonic plates into frequent and violent conflict. Earthquakes and volcanoes become commonplace, and no-one is really sure where the next disaster will occur...

One man, Dr Crane, and a small team of scientists attempt to deconstruct the data on the history of these catastrophes and reassemble it into a definitive prediction engine. It may just be coincidence, but the methods chosen to achieve this – some sort of global finite analysis of the world from a ball of gas and dust to the present day – are vaguely similar, in methodology at least, to Asimov's *Foundation* and his system for interpolating the future of societies throughout the universe. Perhaps as a tip of the hat, perhaps as yet another coincidence, Dr Crane calls his own organisation, “the Foundation.”



The most interesting part of *Richter 10* is the background against which all this endeavour takes place – a politically and socially fragile world, where corporations control governments and profit is more important than people. On top of this, religious tensions threaten to engulf the world in a series of medieval *jihads*. The “scientist vs politician” theme is something that's appeared in Arthur Clarke's work before, notably with *2010*, and the inclusion of this sort of “real world” stuff clearly helps to make the whole scenario appear more realistic. It certainly lifts this work, as Dr Crane not only has to fight the forces of nature, but also the US government, Chinese multinationals and Islamic fundamentalists in his quest to tame the quakes.

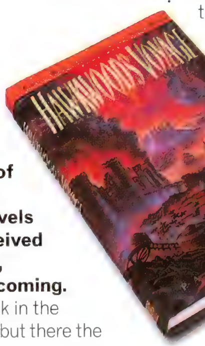
Richter 10 was co-written by the late Mike McQuay, who, although not quite as celebrated as Arthur, produced some compelling SF of his own, notably *Memories* and the award-winning *Puppetmaster*. He's probably responsible for the novel's vital sense of pace, and his obvious talent will be sorely missed...

B+

HAWKWOOD'S VOYAGE

Author: **Paul Kearney**
Publisher: **VGS hardback**
Price/page count: **£16.99, 382pp**
ISBN: **0-575-06054-9**

Text: **Andy Stout**



Irish writer Paul Kearney has been stiffening the sinews of the flaccid body that is fantasy for a couple of novels now. They've all been well received too, so it was inevitable really that, eventually, a series would be forthcoming.

Hawkwood's Voyage is the first book in the projected "Monarchies of God" series, but there the similarities with most other fantasy pot-boilers cease. Admittedly, the plot is nothing new – kingdoms under threat from without by ravening armies and from within by complicated powermongering and intrigues, amidst which a voyage to discover a fabled Western continent is launched – but what Kearney brings to it all is a sense of tough, muscular realism.

The book portrays a low-tech, socially stratified society as it actually would be, rather than coating it in a dusting of saccharine and heroic deeds. Few, if any, of the characters are wholly likeable, and the religious schism brought about by the conflict between the monarchy and the church is rigorously detailed; the poor are downtrodden, and the nobles a bunch of scheming arrogant bastards.

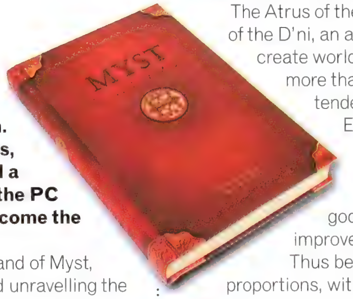
Kearney paints the gore, the sex and the lust for power in vivid colour – and ends up creating one of the best fantasy works for ages. Magepunk, if you like. One can only hope that he can keep it up, and thus prevent the "Monarchies Of God" series from degenerating into yet another bloated, epic, fantasy cycle. The start is certainly promising.

B+

MYST: THE BOOK OF ATRUS

Author: **Robin & Rand Miller with David Wingrove**
Publisher: **Bantam Press hardback**
Price/page count: **£16.99, 287pp**
ISBN: **0593-039599**

Text: **Simon Cox**



For those of you who've never heard of *Myst*, let me clue you in. In 1993, the Miller brothers, Robin and Rand, developed a multimedia adventure game for the PC and Macintosh which went on to become the best-selling CD-ROM game ever.

Set on the surreal and beautiful island of Myst, players were charged with exploring and unravelling the mystery posed by its many worlds – access to which was provided by a series of magical books stored inside a strange library.

And so to the novel of the game. Bound in a suitably ancient-looking mock leather cover, with fake yellowing pages (actually, they're pinkish, but you get the idea), *Myst: The Book of Atrus* is a magical and absorbing read that forms a prequel to the events presented in the game.

The Atrus of the title is the son of Gehn – a member of the D'ni, an ancient race who have the power to create worlds through their writing. Gehn is more than a bit mad, has a megalomaniacal tendency that would make a Roman Emperor blush, and intends to create his worlds so he can rule them with an iron fist. Atrus, though, has other ideas, and believes that, as gods, the D'ni have a responsibility to improve and care for their creations.

Thus begins a father-son battle of epic proportions, within a novel that operates on many different levels; as a metaphor for religious creation, for instance, and as a meditation on the creative process itself – a process the authors have mastered with ease. Readers of last issue's *SFX Files*, where we printed a taster, will know what I mean.

A-

THE UNOFFICIAL X-FILES COMPANION

Author: **NE Genge**
Publisher: **Macmillan paperback**
Price/page count: **£9.99, 228pp**
ISBN: **0-333-65441-2**

Text: **Adrian EC Petford**

At a time when everyone is trying to exploit *The X-Files* franchise, it's becoming increasingly difficult to separate the good merchandise from the cash-ins. The idea of an unauthorised series guide instantly suggests another rip-off, but in this case the book proves to be a real revelation.

Ngaire Genge may be a well-known *X-Files* fan, but she is also a professional historian and biographer, and this really shows through in the quality of her research. Each chapter gives a brief, but adequate episode synopsis, followed by lengthy background information. Subjects covered are as diverse as history, criminology, myths, American politics and the development of the FBI. This makes the book a thorough and fascinating read, both for the avid fan and the general reader.

Trivia buffs will doubtless love each chapter's easy and cryptic quiz on the featured episode, too. If you thought you knew a lot about *The X-Files*, you'll think again after trying these! At least now I know Scully's preferred type of underwear... The biographies of the cast, complete with filmographies and features, are the most detailed I have seen too.

If you're looking for a book of credits, synopses and interviews, wait for the official guide, but if your tastes run more to the unusual, give this one a try. It more than justifies *The X-Files* tag, takes a new and original stance, and deserves more exposure than it's likely to get. It's also much better than Jonathan Ross's wife's attempt.

B+

THE LONG AND THE SHORTS OF CHRISTOPHER FOWLER

PSYCHOVILLE

A-

Author: **Christopher Fowler**
Publisher: **Warner Books paperback**
Price/page count: **£5.99, 417pp**
ISBN: **0-7515-1432-2**

FLESH WOUNDS

B

Author: **Christopher Fowler**
Publisher: **Warner Books paperback**
Price/page count: **£5.99, 275pp**
ISBN: **0-7515-1431-4**

Text: **Dan Abnett**

Not that you could tell from the title or the cover, but *Psychoville* is a quintessentially British affair, a caustic, well-observed and all-too-believable snapshot of British neighbourliness, where the chief vices are pride, snobbery and spite.

It's billed as horror but deals more with pain, deceit and injustice than Stephen King-inspired gore or mayhem. The book, polarised into "then" and "now" episodes, purports to show the outrageous abuse suffered by a working class family who are forced to live in a *nouveau riche* estate on the edge of Croydon, and the revenge that's gleefully taken years later.

Funny, painful, and cathartic, the most alarming aspect about *Psychoville* is that it's all so credible and familiar. The result is, at best, a caricature of modern living, and, at worse, a portrait of your own neighbours.

Fowler's *Flesh Wounds,* however – a collection of short stories – is a little uneven. It lacks the horrid vigour of *Psychoville,* but there's still much to recommend, from nicely turned horror fables to luxurious gothic tales.

Possibly the most interesting story is "The Most Boring Woman in the World," an unnerving monologue that inspired, according to Fowler, the suburbo-phobia of *Psychoville.* A personal favourite was the quietly mythic "Mother of the City."

The urban legend which forms the volume's opener typifies Fowler at his best, deft observations combined with convincing set pieces. It also manages to make the word "imp" frightening. Fowler's very good at investing bland words with horrific potential. "Croydon" is one that also springs to mind...

THE ART OF SF FILMS
SOON TO BE A B MOVIE

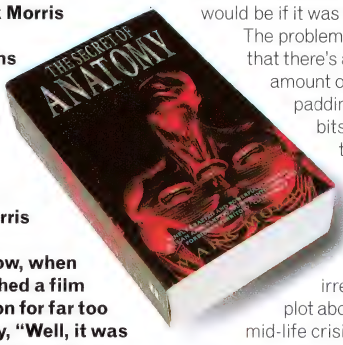
Rian Hughes

The month in BOOKS

From doorstop novels to poster books, welcome to this month's selection of new genre offerings...

THE SECRET OF ANATOMY

Author: **Mark Morris**
Publisher: **HarperCollins paperback**
Price/page count: **£5.99, 479pp**
ISBN: **0-00-649043-3**
Text: **Tim Norris**



You know how, when you've watched a film that's gone on for far too long, you say, "Well, it was okay, but if it'd been better edited it would have been half an hour shorter and a lot more exciting." Well, that's pretty much the way I felt at the end of this 600-odd page marathon by the author of *Toady*.

The story is, at its core, something of a corker. There's a secret society that's been doing secret things for years without any interference from the rest of the world. Indeed, no-one knows anything about said establishment until magazine editor David Fox finds an intriguing message in a bottle and becomes involved in dangerous doings. There are strange powers, people who can turn into extraordinary creatures, the threatened end of civilisation as we know it, and it's all rather entertaining. Or it would be if it was a bit tighter.

The problem, you see, is that there's a huge amount of wibble padding out the bits between the really interesting stuff. There's a tedious (and irrelevant) sub-plot about David's mid-life crisis and the threatened break-up of his marriage, for a start. I read it all because I thought it was bound to be important later. It wasn't.

There's a list of acknowledgements as long as your arm at the beginning too – obviously a kindly nod to countless friends who read early drafts and offered their comments. Sadly, none of them was kind enough to tell Morris to drop the family crisis and make the whole thing a much more exciting read. Heigh-ho.

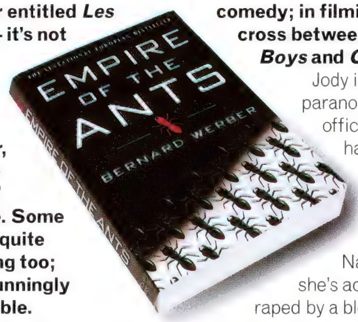
Morris's writing style can be hard work too. He seems to be trying just a little bit *too* hard, and the words are all exiles from a world of simile and metaphor, where every feeling and idea is expressed in terms of something else, like a… Bloody hell, he's got me doing it now. Oh, and only a Klingon could push *pince-nez* spectacles up on his forehead as one character does, Mark...

It's a good story, not very well told, but if you skim-read the family traumas and don't expect too much from the ending, you won't be overly disappointed.

C+

EMPIRE OF THE ANTS

Author: **Bernard Werber**
Publisher: **Bantam hardback**
Price/page count: **£9.99, 273pp**
ISBN Number: **0593-03385X**
Text: **David Langford**



This was originally a French bestseller entitled *Les Fourmis* – it's not Bernard Werber, but his wily translator, who stole HG Wells' story title. Some parts are quite fascinating too; others stunningly unbelievable.

In fact, Werber may well be the Michael Crichton of France (i.e. awesome research, but dodgy plots). His story is mostly told from the viewpoint of ants, nicely researched and nastily detailed, although, inevitably, to make this work, the ants are given more individual intelligence than seems plausible. Still, it's a gripping tale of a truly alien society fighting alien wars, and given extra bite since the alien planet is Earth.

Unfortunately, there's a huge structural problem in the parallel human plotline, which must evidently lead to communication with the ants. Werber has little to say about this – just a few pages of exposition before the ironic cliffhanger ending. His ridiculous delaying action involves dozens of people successively descending sinister cellar stairs into the bowels of the earth and never coming out again.

To British eyes, the French are a weird lot, who, despite the end of the arms race, seem madly keen to explode nuclear weapons in the Pacific. But it appears to me that even the French authorities, knowing that civilians, firemen and policemen have been mysteriously swallowed up, would bloody well send in the military to investigate this cellar! What they do instead is brick up the hole, post a warning message, and let a sweet old lady move into the flat above. Good grief.

Great ants; shame about the logic.

B-

BLOOD SUCKING FIENDS

Author: **Christopher Moore**
Publisher: **Black Swan paperback**
Price/page count: **£5.99, 320pp**
ISBN: **0-552-99596-7**
Text: **Hillary Stephen**

Blood Sucking Fiends sounds like a dodgy video, or a gory horror novel that should be banned – but, in fact, it's neither. Instead, it's a black and crispy vampire comedy; in filmic terms, a cross between _The Lost Boys_ and _Clueless_.

Jody is the sort of paranoid Californian office female who has a fit if a hair's out of place, or she breaks a nail. Naturally, when she's accosted and raped by a bloodsucking fiend, life is never quite the same again. The sun makes her skin turn black and blister, food makes her heave, all her zits have gone... And who's left her that huge bag of money?

Tommy Flood, meanwhile, is a hick youth from Nowheresville, who moves to San Francisco to write great novels, but ends up working at Safeway after a marriage proposal from five Chinese men, while "the Emperor" roams the streets at night, protecting all that is good and just, along with his cohorts Lazarus and Bummer, the dogs of war. But why are the police ignoring his warnings of the bloodsucking fiend who is leaving juice-drained bodies on the street?

What brings these three unlikely suspects together is a tale that's both horrid and funny; a story that will definitely have you turning the pages wanting more. Needless to say, Christopher Moore knows how to tickle the reader's sense of the macabre – particularly as, along with the brilliantly fleshed out main characters, there are plenty of little vignettes to stab the jugular and grab the attention.

CHRISTOPHER MOORE
BLOOD SUCKING FIENDS

A-

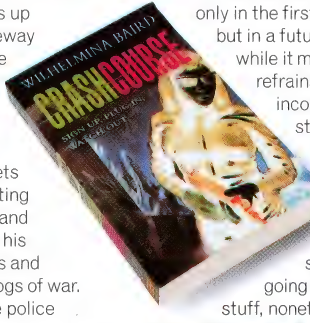
CRASHCOURSE

Author: **Wilhelmina Baird**
Publisher: **Roc paperback**
Price/page count: **£4.99, 277pp**
ISBN: **0-45-118557-9**
Text: **MJ Simpson**

Crashcourse is a slackerpunk* novel, telling of a disaffected generation of young people who exist in a technologically advanced future, and who have either far too much money, or none at all; a sort of Generation X+1.

Cass (straight female cat-burglar) lives with Moke (straight male sculptor) and Dosh (bisexual male prostitute) on some unspecified planet, and all dream of leaving. One way to raise enough money is to act in a film, except in this world films are integrated into real life, which means you're never certain whether what happens is real, or been set up by some crazy producer.

After a slow start, *Crashcourse* turns into a fast-paced and entertaining story, with Moke and Dosh both falling for Mallore, a 16 year old waif whom they encounter. Only Cass smells a rat, and enlists the help of local hood-for-hire Swordfish to find out what's going on. All this is played against a background of invisibility-rendering "coolsuits," Heinlein-ian rolling walkways, and other technology which the reader is supposed to pick up on without any actual narrative description.



Crashcourse is written not only in the first person (Cass), but in a futuristic argot, and while it mercifully refrains from using incomprehensible street slang, you'll need to re-read quite a few lines before you can make any sense of what's going on. Enjoyable stuff, nonetheless.

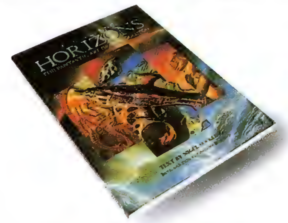
* ***Interesting fact: The term "slackerpunk" was first used in print in the January 1995 issue of SFX magazine.***

B

CTHULHU 2000

Editor: **Jim Turner**
Publisher: **Arkham House hardback**
Price/page count: **£24.95, 413pp**
ISBN: **0-87054-169-2**
Text: **MJ Simpson**

Subtitled "A Lovecraftian Anthology," this gives the impression of being one of those "tribute to" original collections. In fact, Turner has collected together 18 previously printed stories –



Hard Curves

Electric Dreams

STATE OF THE ART

Alien Horizons – The Fantastic Art of Bob Eggleton A-

Hard Curves – The Fantasy Art of Julie Bell B+

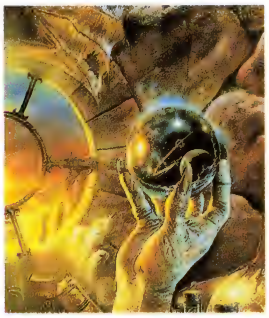
Electric Dreams – The Art of Barclay Shaw A-

Publisher: **Paper Tiger**
Price/page count:
£12.95, 128pp
ISBN: **1-85028-336-2** (Eggleton)
1-85028-223-4 (Bell)
1-85028-364-8 (Shaw)

Text: **MJ Simpson**

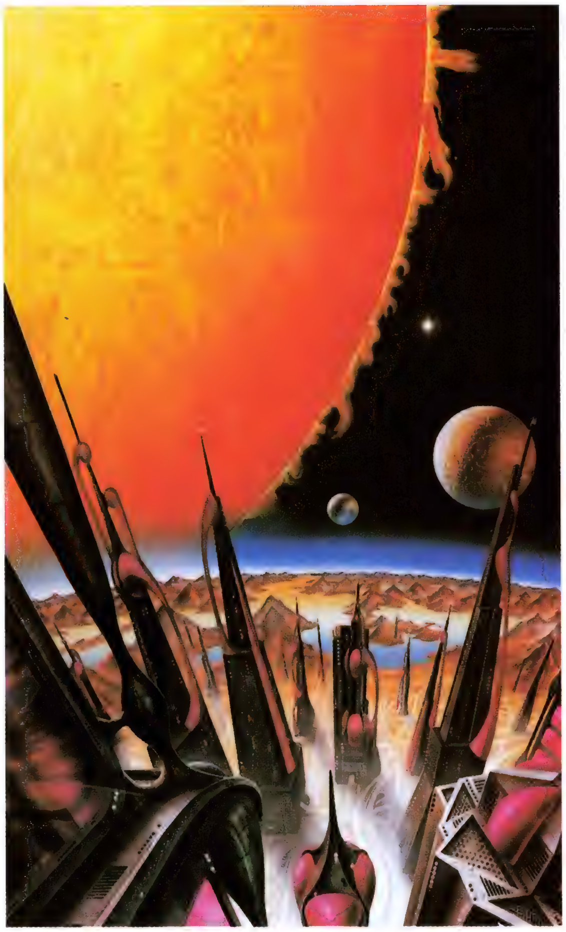
These recent publications from Paper Tiger demonstrate three different approaches to fantasy/SF art.

Hugo-winner Bob Eggleton's work is colourful and excitingly detailed, reminiscent of a slightly more realistic Jim Burns. *Alien Horizons* includes not only extra-terrestrials and spacescapes, but also dinosaurs, dragons and spaceships. Surprisingly, this is the first collection of Eggleton's art, but I suspect it won't be the last. Gregory Benford provides the introduction.


Take a leaf out of Bob Eggleton's book – that's what we did...

Julie Bell is Mrs Boris Vallejo, and it shows – *Hard Curves* has more carefully drawn muscle structures than *Gray's Anatomy!* Whereas most of the Eggleton volume comprises book and magazine covers, Bell's work is largely portfolio pieces or trading cards. Her distinctive style makes much use of highly reflective metallic surfaces, particularly exemplified on paintings of superheroes like Colossus and Iron Man. Also included are a variety of generic fantasy characters, and even slightly fantasticised sports stars. Like her hubby's work, everything is super-realistic, but at least her bio-metallic characters make a pleasant change from Boris' endless Conan-clones.

Finally, there's Barclay Shaw's work, which is more abstract than the other two. His distinctive painting style has been supplemented in recent years by sculptures, and often he combines the two using computers. *Electric Dreams*, like *Alien Horizons*, includes preliminary artwork which demonstrates how the paintings evolve from an initial idea to the finished work. Shaw wrote his own text – the other two books are by Nigel Suckling – and his friend and mentor Harlan Ellison supplied the interesting introduction.


A slice of airbrushed techno art from the imagination of Barclay Shaw.

All three volumes are beautifully produced, printed in superb colour on good quality paper, and come with comprehensive annotations. The only quibble I have is that a few of the larger pictures stretch across two pages, which means certain details get lost in the fold.

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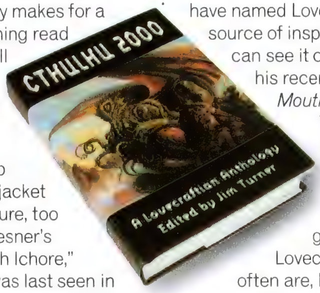
mostly from the '80s and '90s, although there *is* a Joanna Russ tale from 1964 – all of which relate in some way to HPL's work and the mythos he created.

A good range of authors are represented, including Poppy Z Brite, Kim Newman, Bruce Sterling, Michael Shea, Gene Wolfe, Ramsey Campbell, Harlan Ellison and the late, great Roger Zelazny, whose novella "24 Views Of Mt. Fuji, By Hokusai" won a prestigious Hugo award in 1986.

This diversity leads to an equally wide range of styles, which certainly makes for a more entertaining read than a book full of HPL-clones. Some of the stories wrapped up within this Bob Eggleton dustjacket are fairly obscure, too – Esther M Friesner's "Love's Eldritch Ichore," for example, was last seen in the 1990 World Fantasy Convention programme book, of all places, so its reprinting here is to be welcomed.



Lovecraft himself once said, "the peculiar faculty which [Algernon] Blackwood and [Lord] Dunsany possess simply isn't mine" – which, translated into plain English, means he thought that he wasn't as good a writer as they were. But while the relative merits of the authors in question may be debated, there can be no doubt that Howard Phillips Lovecraft has displayed far more influence and longevity than his contemporaries – people like horror director John Carpenter have named Lovecraft as a source of inspiration, and you can see it clearly in one of his recent films, *In the Mouth of Madness*.

Those new to HPL-as-genre may find some of the stories heavy going, as Lovecraftian things often are, but at least most of them can be enjoyed on their own, without detailed knowledge of the Lovecraft-ian universe. Indeed, this might make *Cthulhu 2000* quite a sensible starting point for beginners. B

December

Author: **Phil Rickman**
Publisher: **Macmillan paperback**
Price/page: **£5.99, 658pp**
ISBN: **0-330-336-770**
Text: **Andrew Gonzales**

Dead rock stars, psychic rock bands, bisexual vicars and a demonic Welsh abbey – ordinarily the stuff of *News of the World* exposés – collide violently in Phil Rickman's *December*.

DECEMBER
Phil Rickman

When, in 1980, depraved record label boss Max Goff brings together four gifted musicians to record a concept album in a ruined abbey – which was the site of the violent death of a 12th century Welsh bard – disaster is inevitable (and we don't just mean music that sounds like Spinal Tap meets Hawkwind). Sure enough, the recording session turns into a nightmare when, during a song written about the bard, the group's collective minds mentally tune into the ancient slaughter – and the murder of a British rock star in New York.

The recording sessions are left incomplete (possibly a good thing – I can't see prog rock with a Satanic tinge setting the charts alight in the New Romantic era of the early '80s; cod SF was always more the order of the day with Duran and co.), and the four go their separate ways – two opting for reclusion, one joining the church and the other managing to eke out an existence as a rock 'n' pop star impersonator. And so things trundle along until, in 1994, they are once more brought together to finish the album in a desperate attempt to exorcise the past (and not just because Meatloaf has made bad rock hip again).

There's a very slim line between post-modernism and what is simply naff, and *December* at times comes perilously close to the latter, particularly in the opening few chapters. Fortunately, Rickman's characterisation, building of suspense, and reluctance to indulge in visceral thrills keep the novel from becoming the literary equivalent of the rock/horror movie *Trick or Treat* (you know, the one with Ozzie Osborne trying to act).

As yet nobody has successfully managed to completely successfully integrate rock music with the horror genre, but this is certainly a valiant, and fairly entertaining, attempt. As modern horror literature goes, Rickman proves himself a cut above many of his contemporaries. C+

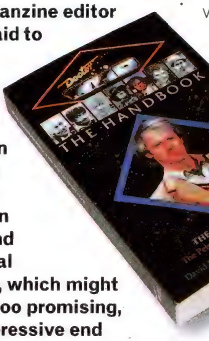
THE ART OF SF FILMS

The month in BOOKS

DOCTOR WHO: THE HANDBOOK – THE FIFTH DOCTOR

Authors: **David J Howe & Stephen James Walker**
Publisher: **Virgin paperback**
Price/page count: **£4.99, 294pp**
ISBN: **0-426-20458-1**
Text: **Dave Golder**

Or, "Everything you ever wanted to know about the Davison era of *Doctor Who,* and some fanzine editor wasn't afraid to ask." In essence, this is a "best of" compilation of features previously published in fanzines and professional magazines, which might not sound too promising, but the impressive end result exonerates its blatant magpie origins.



Like the previous *Handbooks* (covering the first, fourth and sixth Doctors), this has been meticulously researched and intelligently pieced together by respected *Whovians* Howe and Walker. There's little here which hasn't been revealed elsewhere in the past (the authors always acknowledge their sources), but never has such a comprehensive range of information on the fifth Doctor been available in the one volume before.

So what do you get for your five quid? Well, there's Davison talking about his era, breakdowns of every story (with running times), broadcast dates, viewing figures, reviews, information on repeats, trivia, interviews with the script editors, a remarkably in-depth study of getting *The Five Doctors* from script to screen, details of stories that were never made (did you know that comic authors Pat Mills and John Wagner were once commissioned to do a story called "Whale Song," for example, or that fantasy author Tanith Lee got as far as doing a script?) and, as they say, much, much more.

One thing that the book clearly has going for it is the fact that, unlike in previous eras, everybody who worked on the Davison shows seems to have been incredibly outspoken. There's no word-mincing here – everyone seems happy to chuck the muck around.

And yet the final vision *The Handbook* portrays is not one of a group of "artistes" getting all *prima donna*-ish, but rather, of a bunch of intelligent people who just happened to have *very* different ideas about the direction the show should be taking. *The Sixth Doctor* edition (Colin Baker) might have had all the fireworks of the hiatus and the sacking to up the tragedy quotient, but this book portrays an even greater sadness – as you read it, it becomes increasingly clear that, while viewing figures remained respectable, the rot was slowly setting in... With the hugely popular Tom Baker having just left, and the move from Saturdays to more mundane weekdays, the show was forced into a role it just wasn't suited for.

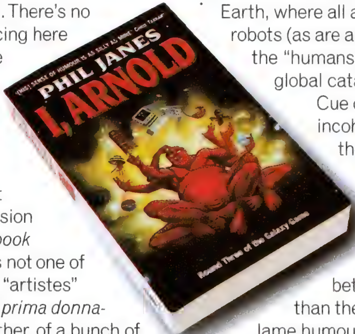
Like the best fanzines, *The Fifth Doctor* doesn't pull punches, and while the end result is a bit downbeat, it's certainly an absorbing browse. Yes, it's probably for hardcore *Whovians* only, but they shouldn't be disappointed.

B+

I, ARNOLD

Author: **Phil Janes**
Publisher: **Millennium paperback**
Price/page count: **£4.99, 280pp**
ISBN: **1-85798-404-8**
Text: **Dave Golder**

Be honest – would you want your book endorsed by Chris Tarrant with the cover blurb, "[His] sense of humour is as silly as mine"? It's like getting Jean Luc Picard to endorse Head and Shoulders.



Then again, there's no getting away from the fact that *I, Arnold* does have about the same level of wit as your average local DJ. The third part of Janes' "Galaxy Game" series, it tries to be *Hitchhiker's Guide* and ends up *Carry On Space Vets.* As the battle between the Ultimate Beings reaches round three, the two combatants' champions, humans and trands, are whisked off to an alternative Earth, where all animals are robots (as are a good deal of the "humans") to prevent a global catastrophe.

Cue one of the most incoherent plots in the history of bookdom, which flits about all over the place for no better excuse than the pursuit of lame humour – it never lets anything so gross as making sense get in the way of a bad joke. Even the characters seem like pale imitations of existing SF comedy characters – the "hero" Curtis comes across like Arnold Rimmer's long lost brother, for instance.

Try this for a typical slice of what passes for humour in the book: "A slow smile of relief spread across Curtis's face, as a dark stain of relief spread across the base of the tree" – toilet humour and bad puns cobbled together about as seamlessly as the stitchwork on Frankenstein's monster.

And yet it's precisely this kind of frankly unamusing dross that sells. Chris Tarrant must have a pretty big family.

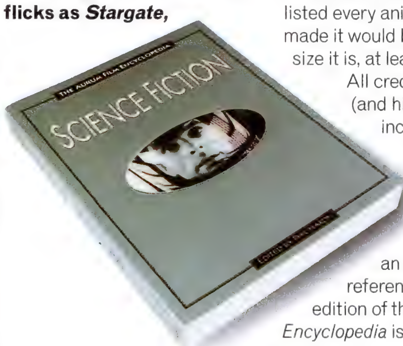
D

THE AURUM FILM ENCYLOPEDIA OF SCIENCE FICTION

Editor: **Phil Hardy**
Publisher: **Aurum hardback**
Price/page count: **£25, 512pp**
ISBN: **1-85410-382-2**

Text: **MJ Simpson**

When *The Aurum Film Encyclopedias* were first published in the mid-'80s, the plan was originally for six volumes, but only three ever actually appeared: SF, Horror and Westerns. Since then, Phil Hardy has been busy periodically updating this trio, and plans for the other three – Thrillers, Romance and Children's, if memory serves me correctly – have apparently been shelved. No matter, for it's the SF book that concerns us, and here it is, updated to include all the great (and not so great) genre movies of 1994. So now we get entries for such flicks as *Stargate, TimeCop* and *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein.*



If you've encountered any of the earlier editions, you'll know what to expect. For those of you new to the Aurum series, this book provides a guide to pretty much *every* SF movie made since the Brothers Lumière filmed *Charcuterie Mechanique* in 1895, along with credits, synopses, background info and often black and white stills. Admittedly, there's an emphasis on British and American movies, but it's less obvious than before, and Hardy makes it clear in his introduction that he's seeking to redress the balance.

What you *won't* find here is fantasy or horror flicks (unless there's an identifiable SF element), or any short films made after the introduction of sound. There are virtually no cartoons, either: *Akira* is mentioned, but if the book listed every anime film ever made it would be twice the size it is, at least!

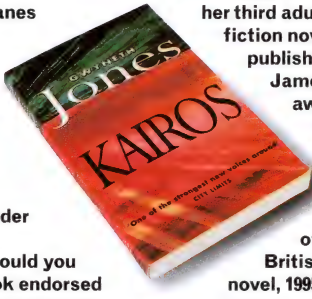
All credit to Hardy (and his contributors, including Kim Newman and Denis Gifford) for maintaining this book as an essential reference. An updated edition of the *Horror Encyclopedia* is due out very soon.

A-

KAIROS

Author: **Gywneth Jones**
Publisher: **Gollancz paperback**
Price/page count: **£5.99, 262pp**
ISBN: **0-575-00607-2**
Text: **Simon Bisson**

There's a tradition in British science fiction of the cosy catastrophe, tales where the world ends with a whimper, not a bang. With *Kairos* – her third adult science fiction novel, originally published in 1988 – James Tiptree award-winner Gywneth Jones gives us her version of the great British disaster novel, 1995-style.



It's the day after tomorrow, and Britain is dropping out of the First World into the Third. Somewhere out there, the Third World War is being fought, but no-one really seems to care. The police are out of control, and the underclass are struggling to survive. BREAKTHRU, a right wing religious group, thinks it has the answer: A new drug, Kairos. Unlike most psychedelics, this one can really change the world, rewriting reality through a miracle of quantum physics. Now, with Kairos, BREAKTHRU plans to rebuild the world in its own image. But too many different people have taken the drug, and the world is starting to fall apart at the seams.

In Jones' home town of Brighton, a group of drop-outs and anarchists find themselves caught up in a conspiracy of angels and puppies. Otto Murray, her son Candide and her estranged lover Sandy Brize must each journey across a fractured England under a fractal sun, pursued by BREAKTHRU's gilded apocalyptic children, seeking both each other and Candide's kidnapped dog. Finally, in an abandoned research laboratory near Coventry, Sandy must confront the power of the Kairos she's taken, and attempt to knit the tattered world back together again.

Kairos is one of those brave novels that transcends the boundaries between science fiction and the mainstream. The science fiction reader can delight in the broken Britain as an obvious homage to Michael Moorcock's seminal Jerry Cornelius tales and M John Harrison's *The Committed Men,* while the literature student can happily deconstruct *Kairos* as a guide to the mental geography of England after Thatcher.

Jones' novels are never easy reads, but her powerful prose and bleak futuristic landscapes mean that *Kairos* always rewards the effort it demands.

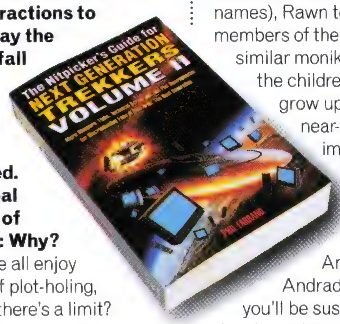
B

THE NITPICKER'S GUIDE FOR NEXT GENERATION TREKKERS VOLUME 2

Author: **Phil Farrand**
Publisher: **Titan Books paperback**
Price/page count: **£7.99, 407pp**
ISBN: **1-85286-671-3**
Text: **Karen Levell**

It's sad and nerdy, but for dedicated Fed-heads, this second volume of *The Nitpicker's Guide* is also strangely appealing. Well, some of the time. Like its

predecessor, volume two reveals the numerous plot discrepancies, technical inconsistencies and continuity errors that plague the crew of the Enterprise D as they voyaged through the cosmos... Everything from the number of times Data uses contractions to the odd way the shadows fall during the location shots is scrutinised. But the real question, of course, is: Why?



Okay, we all enjoy the sport of plot-holing, but surely there's a limit? After all, do we really care that the starfield outside Picard's ready room is travelling in the wrong direction relative to the ship's orbit? Is it really worth sniping at Brent Spiner for squinting as his android character walks into harsh sunlight? You sometimes wonder whether these folks actually understand the concept of fiction at all...

Having said that, the book does contain some interesting gaffs, such as Data's supposition that if they travel back to the Devron System in the episode "All Good Things..." they should be able to see the formation of the anti-time rupture – a neat trick since its effects travel backwards in time and our crew is heading forward. Erm.

For the most part, the author offers his entertaining ruminations with a good deal of grace and gentle humour – and the fact that the reader submissions, which make up a large chunk of the book, have been rewritten to fit into this style certainly helps matters. But despite its thoroughness and self-mocking tone, the inanity of many of the entries means it still falls some way short of the must-read mark. And at £8, you'd think they'd send it to you in a brown paper bag.

C+

Skybowl

Author: **Melanie Rawn**
Publisher: **Pan paperback**
Price/page count: **£5.99, 672pp**
ISBN: **0-330-33318-6**
Text: **Mary Branscombe**

MELANIE RAWN
SKYBOWL
DRAGON STAR: BOOK THREE

It's people rather than places, principles or politics that are at the heart of Melanie Rawn's books, and you need to figure out a way of keeping track of them all if you're going to get the most out of what's really a rather enjoyable tale of magic, battles, and the odd dragon.

You can't rely on names, because in order to show the complex inter-relations of the people of her world (or perhaps because she ran out of ideas for names), Rawn tends to give members of the same family similar monikers. And since the children invariably grow up to oppose their near-namesakes, it's important to get clear in your mind the difference between, say, Andry, Andrev and Andrade – otherwise you'll be suspecting some of the characters of incest rather than just adultery.

Ah yes, adultery... Oh, and deceit, rape, madness, plague, treachery, sorcery and unrighted wrongs from generations long dead... It's all here. As the barbarian horde advances to destroy the people of the desert, the High Prince, and would-be-Torquemada, Lord of Goddess Keep have to decide whether to put aside their differences to fight the invaders or squabble just long and hard enough to keep the intricate plot going. There's never a dull moment...

With such a profusion of similar characters, it can be hard to care what happens to any of them as they play out their epic destiny; it's far too easy to lose track of who's struggling against who at any given moment. Still, if you've read the previous two books of the "Dragon Star" trilogy, and the three "Sunrunners" titles, you may be familiar with many of the players by now. But this can't disguise the fact that, fascinating though the plot and characters may be, the pace is too slow, and there's too much internal dialogue at the expense of action or description.

There are no loose ends left dangling after the last battle either... But don't rule out a *Dragon Star: The Next Generation* just yet.

B-

Slow River

Author: **Nicola Griffith**
Publisher: **HarperCollins paperback**
Price/page count: **£4.99, 344pp**
ISBN: **0-00-648033-3**
Text: **David Langford**

It's an old science-fictional plot device – to chuck your lead character out of a wealthy, privileged existence and into the horrible sewers of a future

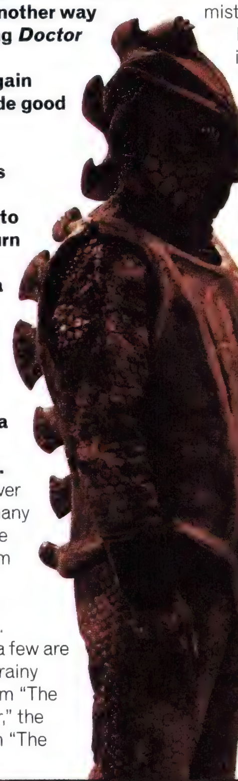
PICTURE THIS!

Doctor Who Poster Book

Author: **Adrian Rigelsford**
Publisher: **Boxtree**
Price/page count: **£9.99, 68pp**
ISBN: **0-7522-0795-4**

Text: **Dave Golder**

We've got a licence and we're going to flog it. Boxtree find yet another way of marketing *Doctor Who*, and once again they've made good use of Adrian Rigelsford's seemingly infinite photo library to turn what could have been a bit of cheesy Christmas cash-in into something a little more worthwhile.



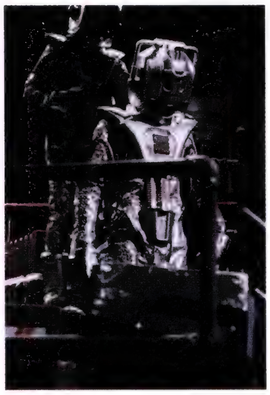
As the cover proclaims, many of posters are enlarged from previously unpublished photographs. Admittedly, a few are either a bit grainy (Pertwee from "The Time Warrior," the Fendahl from "The Image of Fendahl") or even just too plain dull (Baker and Tamm looking bored during "The Pirate Planet," a badly-lit Alpha Centauri) to make good A4 posters. The best images seem to be the ones that are more familiar (four of the Doctors together in "The Five Doctors," Pertwee fiddling with a gadget in "Invasion of the Dinosaurs"), while using a picture of that giant rat from "The Talons of Weng-Chiang" has got to be a mistake.

But there's enough interesting stuff here (including a great shot of Leela in knife-between-clenched-teeth pose, and some gloriously '70s-looking Mandrels, complete with flares) to make it worth a look.

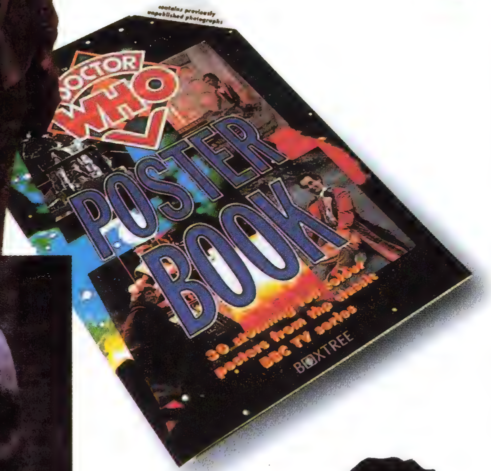
Fans of *Who's* black and white era will be disappointed, however – only Patrick Troughton makes an appearance, and then from his post-1969 work, but at least, because it's a poster book, you can forgive Boxtree for the usual trite text.

Still, even if you have seen many of the pictures before, the high-quality, gloss paper all the posters are printed on at least means they'll spend a long time on your wall before the Blu-Tack starts seeping through. If you're brave (and bold) enough to put any of them on your wall, that is.

C+



You've see one Cyberman, you've seen them all. Can't tell 'em apart. But at least they're in a different pose than usual.


contains previously unpublished photographs
DOCTOR WHO
POSTER BOOK
30 stunning full-colour posters from the classic BBC TV series
BOXTREE

A close-up of Lynx from "The Time Warrior," so that you can study those hairs in detail.

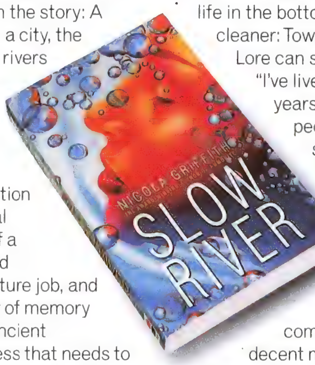
One of the more familiar posters – The seventh Doctor in post-regenerative fashion crisis.

THE ART OF SF FILMS

The month in BOOKS

world. Nicola Griffith, a fine writer, rings changes on the theme to produce something rather special. Her wounded but slowly recovering heroine Lore is memorable.

More than one slow river flows through the story: A literal river in a city, the underground rivers of tainted water whose round-the-clock decontamination offers the real excitement of a believable and dangerous future job, and a darker river of memory polluted by ancient unpleasantness that needs to be traced and confronted.



Low-life cross-currents are skilfully deployed: Credible Internet charity scams, kidnapping, fashionable designer drugs, sex (usually lesbian), sadism, advanced digital porn, sabotage, information and identity theft – all solidly human, without the easy dazzle of cyberpunk *cliché*. There are no disposable characters either. Real life isn't as cheap as some fiction would have us believe.

High life proves worse. More than one member of Lore's multinational-owning family is full of maggots and rot beneath the glittering exterior. Big business simultaneously encourages and absolves itself from ecological crimes by engineering genetic miracles with special loopholes designed to maintain profits. Ironically, life in the bottom muck is cleaner: Towards the end, Lore can say proudly, "I've lived here three years. I'm one of the people I used to be scared of."

Slow River is an extremely mature SF novel which pulls off the difficult trick of combining a solidly decent moral stance with compelling readability. I was impressed, and look forward to seeing more from Nicola Griffith.

A

STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE – THE WAY OF THE WARRIOR

Author: **Diane Carey**
Publisher: **Pocket Books**
Price/page count: **£4.99, 279pp**
ISBN: **0-671-56813-2**
Text: **Nick Peers**

The novelization of the ultimate Deep Space Nine adventure!
STAR TREK
DEEP SPACE NINE
THE WAY OF THE WARRIOR
A Novel by Diane Carey
Based on The Way of the Warrior written by Ira Steven Behr & Robert Hewitt Wolfe

Hot on the heels of the *première* of *Deep Space Nine's* much-altered fourth year comes Diane Carey's novelisation of the two-hour opening episode. For many people in the UK this will be their first chance to judge the new direction the series is taking, and if the novel is anything to go by, it's going to be an intriguing season.

The Way of the Warrior introduces Worf as a regular character, and chronicles a radical shift in Klingon-Federation relations. All this is played out in Bajoran and Cardassian space, with tensions rising as a direct consequence of Klingon paranoia about the shape-shifting Dominion invading through the wormhole.

This is a decent novelisation: Characterization is spot-on, and Carey effectively conveys the protagonists' thoughts and emotions, inner motivations that, in the series, can only be guessed at. Sisko and Worf inevitably come off best – the newly promoted captain looks more than a match for Star Fleet's sole Klingon – but characters such as Odo and Dax aren't entirely forgotten either.

Indeed, the only possible problem is that the novel might be *too* good. Anyone familiar with JM Dilliad's novelisation of *Star Trek V* will know that you can make a bad film look much better on paper. Still, if nothing else, Carey's story will make you want to catch the TV version of "The Way..." as soon as possible.

A-

STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION – CROSSOVER

Author: **Michael Jan Friedman**
Publisher: **Pocket Books hardback**
Price/page count: **£9.99, 305pp**
ISBN: **0-671-89677-6**
Text: **Karen Levell**

Spock, Scotty, McCoy, Picard, the Enterprise D, Romulan commanders, prison camps, escapes, rescues, explosions and lots of shooting... Yep, welcome aboard the USS Crossover, a celebratory romp through 23rd and 24th Century *Trek* from the pen of veteran *Trek* author Friedman.

Set in the eighth year of Picard's command, *Crossover* picks up story threads left dangling in "Encounter at Farpoint," "Unification" and "Relics." But while it falls under the *TNG* banner, the chaos that follows owes more to the gung-ho exploits of Kirk's era than the cerebral wranglings of Picard and co.

Ambassador Spock is captured during a Unificationist meeting on one of the Empire's outer worlds. Before a quizzical eyebrow can be raised, though, the Enterprise D is ordered to pick up a mission specialist and negotiate a release with the Romulan High Command. Unfortunately for Picard, that mission specialist is Admiral Leonard McCoy, who, on reaching the age of 149, has become crabbier than ever.

Never one to be left out, Scotty intercepts the message detailing Spock's capture and sets off to rescue him. From there on in it's action all the way, as the two crews race to rescue Spock before the Romulans discover his identity.

As with all Friedman novels, the characterisation is spot on. Spock is eminently logical, Scotty works his miracles and McCoy cracks one last, "Dammit, I'm a doctor..." joke. This is the tribute which *Generations* should have been – and a fitting end to the two series...

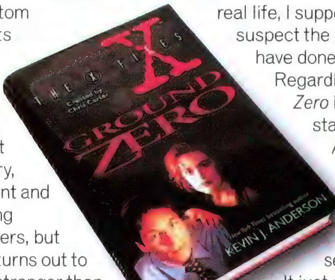
B+

THE X-FILES: GROUND ZERO

Author: **Kevin J Anderson**
Publisher: **Voyager hardback**
Price/page count: **£9.99, 290pp**
ISBN: **0-00-225448-4**
Text: **Hillary Stephen**

There's no doubt that *Ground Zero* will head to the top of the charts this Christmas. I can't see it making the show any new fans, however – this is the ultimate TV spin-off, coming across exactly like an episode of the world's favourite cult telly series.

Kevin J Anderson makes the eccentricities and quirks of Mulder and Scully come alive as you read it – you can almost picture Duchovny and Anderson going through their paces shot-for-shot. As the title suggests, the plot concerns nuclear weapons testing – Mulder and Scully are called in to investigate the mysterious radiation deaths of several people connected with the first atom bomb tests in the '40s. *En route,* they run up against the military, government and anti-testing campaigners, but the truth turns out to be much stranger than either suspect.



There are many references to the TV series – even down to specific events – which tie the novel closely to the show, even to the extent of providing the odd new insight into the world of *The X-Files*. But while Anderson develops the central characters more fully than Charles Grant (who wrote the first two *X-Files* novels, *Goblins* and *Whirlwind),* the story and plot of *Ground Zero* don't really go anywhere very much, moving backwards and forwards between the various protagonists without reaching any conclusions.

There are no real good guys or bad guys – as there aren't in real life, I suppose – but I suspect the book could have done with some.

Regardless, *Ground Zero* is a brilliant start for Kevin J Anderson's *X-Files* writing career, and captures the feel of the series perfectly. It just could have done with a bit more in the way of drama and shock elements, that's all.

B+

Coming Soon

Star Wars: Tales from Jabba's Palace
Ed. Kevin J Anderson, Bantam **11 Jan**
The second of Kevin J Anderson's short *Star Wars* story collections, this one filling in the backgrounds of the creatures that populated Jabba's Palace in *Return of the Jedi*.

Celestial Dogs
Jay Russell, Raven **15 Jan**
The latest trend seems to be detective novels with occult undertones. Powerful demons are upstaged by an even greater evil – Hollywood producers – in Jay Russell's first genre title.

The Reality Dysfunction
Peter F Hamilton, Millennium **26 Jan**
Part one of Peter F Hamilton's space opera trilogy is bigger than most people's entire trilogies.

Entertainment Bomb
Colin Bennett, New Futurist Books **1 Feb**
Post-modern, near-future satire about celebrities becoming more important than politicians.

Endymion
Dan Simmons/Headline **15 Feb**
Third in the Hugo-awarded "Hyperion" trilogy (well, part one got the award, and part two was nominated), *Endymion* starts with the eponymous hero waking up after his execution to find he's been chosen to save the world.

Ace!
Sophie Aldred & Mike Tucker, Virgin **21 Mar**
A behind-the-scenes look at the last three years of *Doctor Who* from the point of view of his last (and best?) companion. (There's a pic of her in a skin-tight PVC suit on the back too.)

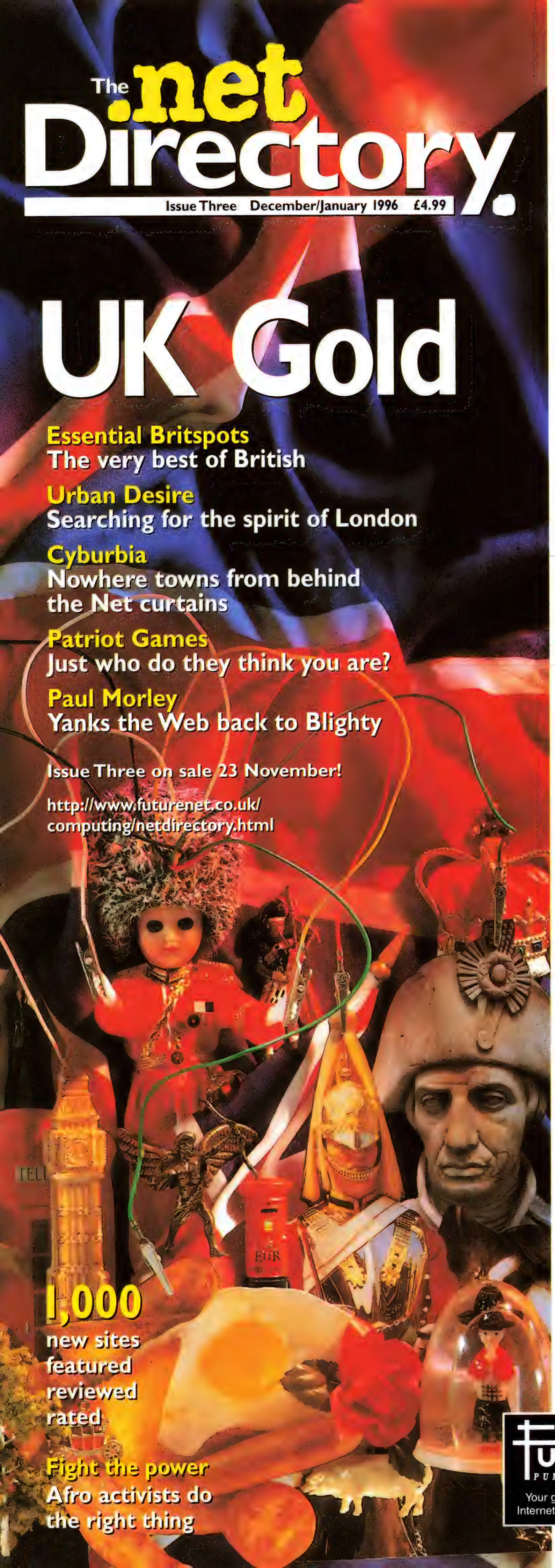
Best-selling SF books

A Licence to Make Money

The name's Anderson. Kevin J Anderson. Licence to make money. He must be raking it in at the moment. Not only does he claim the top two positions in this month's chart (sharing top billing with *Star Wars'* conceptual artist Ralph McQuarrie), but he also makes an impressive showing with the latest, and undoubtedly the best, *X-Files* novel at number seven. But it's not all licences that people will be considering as Christmas presents this month. Fantasy makes a good showing in the goth guise of Storm Constantine, as well as CJ Cherryh and Terry Pratchett (of course).

The Forbidden Planet SF Book Chart

1 **The Illustrated Star Wars** Ralph McQuarrie/Kevin J Anderson (Bantam)
2 **Star Wars: Darksabre** Kevin J Anderson (Bantam)
3 **Stalking Tender Prey** Storm Constantine (Creed)
4 **Fortress in the Eye of Time** CJ Cherryh (Voyager)
5 **Shadow's End** Sherri S Tepper (Voyager)
6 **Runes of War** J Welch (Voyager)
7 **The X-Files: Ground Zero** Kevin Anderson (Voyager)
8 **The Truth is Out There** Brian Lowry (Voyager)
9 **Interesting Times** Terry Pratchett (Bantam)
10 **Curse of the Shadow Image** M Anthony (TSR)



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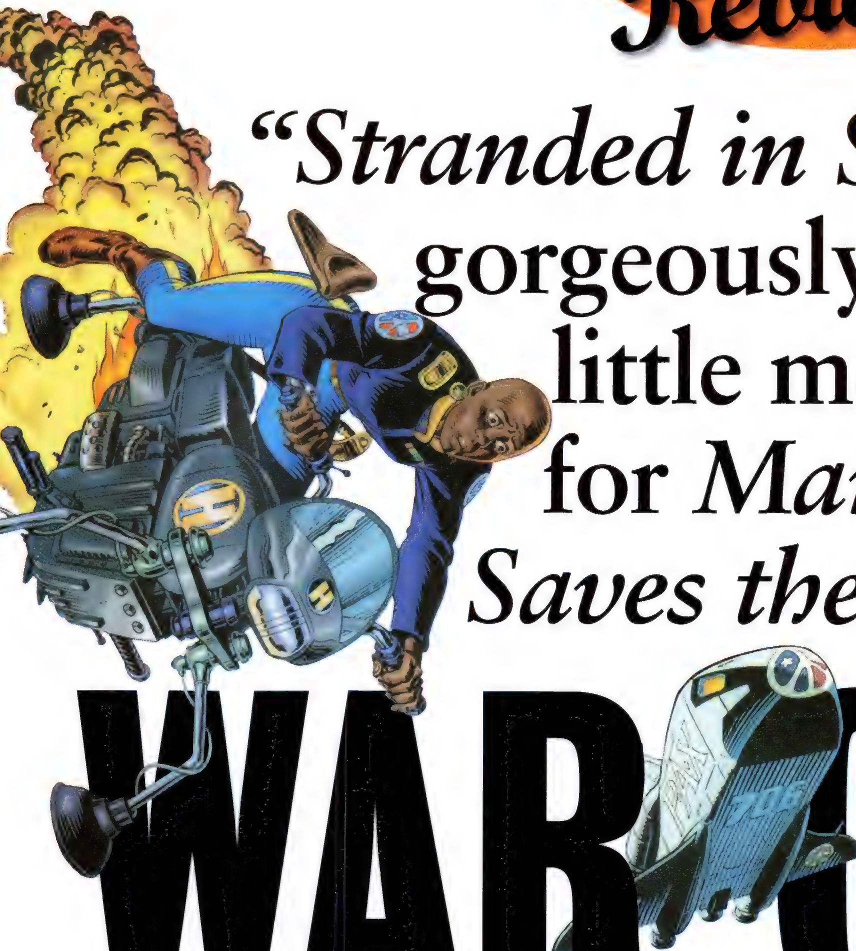


> "*Stranded in Space* is thin, if gorgeously executed, stuff; little more than a teaser for *Martha Washington Saves the World...*"

WAR CHILD

The wonderful Martha Washington, modern comics' best SF heroine, is back...

MARTHA WASHINGTON STRANDED IN SPACE

Issues: **1**
Price: **£1.85**
B+

GIVE ME LIBERTY

Issues: **1-4**
Price: **£3.10 each** (or graphic novel, £8.99)
A

MARTHA WASHINGTON GOES TO WAR

Issues: **1-5**
Price: **£1.85 each** (collected graphic novel coming soon)
A

HAPPY BIRTHDAY MARTHA WASHINGTON

Issues: **1**
Price: **£1.85**
B+

Publisher: **Dark Horse/Legend**
Writer: **Frank Miller**
Artist: **Dave Gibbons**

Text: **Matt Bielby**

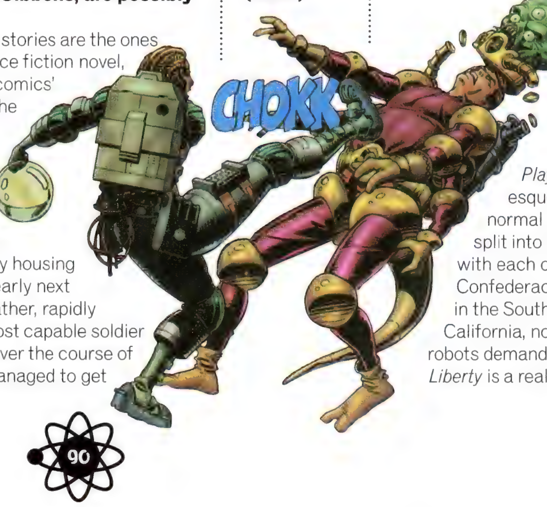
If you wanted to make a list of important science fiction characters in modern comics, you'd be hard pushed to find any to rank above Martha Washington. Frank Miller, arguably comics' greatest creator over the past 20 years, has three important creator-owned series currently on the go – *The Big Guy & Rusty the Boy Robot,* a lightweight pastiche of '50s SF movies; *Sin City,* his variation on the hardboiled crime novel; and Martha. And the Washington tales, co-created and drawn by *Watchmen* artist Dave Gibbons, are possibly the best of the three.

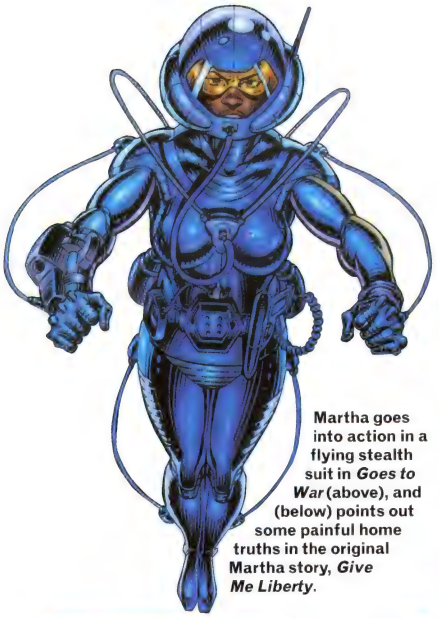
In *Martha Washington Goes to War*, Martha has to make do with some of the crappiest machinery *ever* (top left), but she's wise enough to see through the enemy's ruses, as in *Stranded in Space* (below).

Certainly, the Martha stories are the ones that read most like a science fiction novel, and are probably modern comics' best attempt to continue the *Watchmen/Dark Knight Returns/Elektra Assassin* tradition of big-scale-adventure-stories-with-a-point. Martha is a young black woman from Cabrini Green, an inner-city housing project in the America of early next century. She is also – or, rather, rapidly becomes – perhaps the most capable soldier the world has ever seen. Over the course of the comics, Martha has managed to get herself in the thick of every war going – and in the next century, apparently, there are a *lot* of wars...

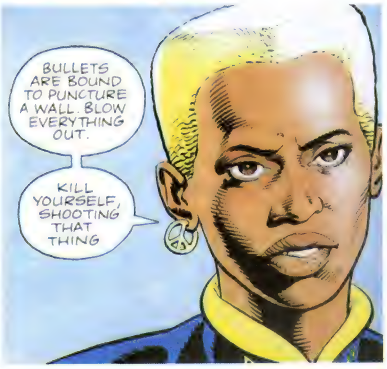
The story begins in *Give Me Liberty* (1990), a series of four 48-page comics soon collected into a graphic novel. It takes Martha from her birth in 1995, through riots, the death of her dad, killing her first man (for revenge, age 13) to joining the Peace Force ("PAX") a year later on in... well, bugger all pages, really. Fighting against the forest-destroying Fat Boy burger company in South America, where she quickly learns combat skills to rival James Bond, is but the first of many adventures.

As the pages flow by, *Liberty* gets increasingly science fictiony – introducing *Akira*-like psychic mutants, giant Ronald McDonald-esque robots, penis-shaped space cannons and beautiful Brigitte Nielsen clones in rapid succession. The satire gets heavier too, mixing in fake magazine features (from the *Playboy*-like "Meatrack," the *Time*-esque "Era," and so on) with the normal comic stuff, and detailing a US split into nine rival nations, all at war with each other, ranging from The First Sex Confederacy (an all-women State located in the South) to Wonderland (once California, now dominated by funny animal robots demanding equal rights). *Give Me Liberty* is a real all-action rollercoaster ride,





Martha goes into action in a flying stealth suit in *Goes to War* (above), and (below) points out some painful home truths in the original Martha story, *Give Me Liberty*.


BULLETS ARE BOUND TO PUNCTURE A WALL. BLOW EVERYTHING OUT.
KILL YOURSELF, SHOOTING THAT THING

like an intelligent Arnie film, but with a more interesting protagonist, and action sequences that would dwarf a hundred *True Lies.*

Martha returned in 1994's ***Martha Washington Goes to War,*** an equally impressive follow-up. Out went all the fake magazine clippings (perhaps the idea was that society had fragmented so far there wouldn't *be* mags any more), but in came new computer-generated colour, adding a glorious 3D feel to Gibbons' already impeccable line art. In, too, came an older Martha Washington (all of 19 now, and promoted to Lieutenant), who's fighting in the second American civil war against Texas, hampered by equipment that simply refuses to work.

The state of the world has, if anything, got even worse than it was in *Give Me Liberty,* and the storytelling even more action-packed. The technology is more advanced too – Martha's war is run from a gigantic tethered satellite called Harmony, and mysterious "ghosts," using advanced stealth technology, hamper her every move. The rollercoaster ride ends remarkably quickly, though, and by 2016 we've got victory, of a sort, and the slim chance of world peace.

Since then we've had the ***Happy Birthday Martha Washington*** one-shot, featuring two short stories from the war, and this month's ***Martha Washington Stranded in Space,*** the main excuse for this detailed retrospective. Again, the latter features two short stories, the first an almost *Star Trek*-like "temporal anomaly" thing that results in a brief crossover with Miller's *The Big Guy,* and the second a brief joke about the plot of *Watchmen.*

Stranded in Space is thin stuff, gorgeously executed, but really little more than a teaser for the next major Martha storyline, *Martha Washington Saves the World.* That sounds great, though. "It's big. It's old. It's dead. It's miles and tons of alien technology, and it's smashing through Saturn's rings and hurtling right at us," reads the blurb. "There's only one hope for planet Earth. And she's having trouble thinking straight." I can't wait.

THE HORRORIST

Publisher: **DC/Vertigo**
Writer: **Jamie Delano**
Artist: **David Lloyd**
Issues: **1** (of 2)
Price: **£3.70**
Text: **Matt Bielby**

John Constantine is one of the most interesting characters in comics at the moment, and this special two-parter starring JC, which serves to introduce a mysterious character who might just be "the embodiment of all the pain in the world," comes highly recommended.

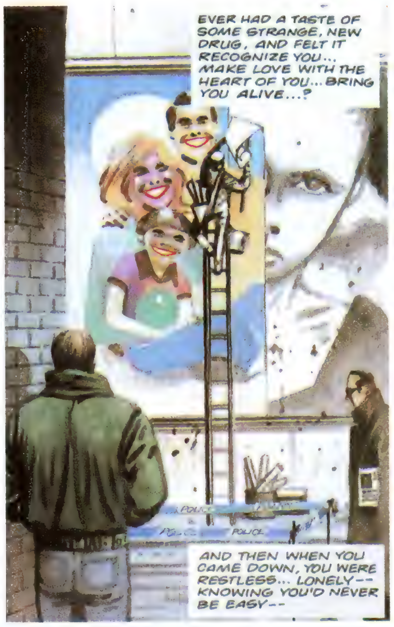
The Horrorist is a teenage African girl, adopted by American missionaries, and brought home to Minnesota. Now on a road journey across America, after her presence seemingly destroys (by suicide, disease...) her previously healthy host family, she brings magical terror wherever she goes. On her trail: London-based mage John Constantine, who's become obsessed with her image.

Jamie Delano is best known, among other things, for writing early issues of the regular Constantine comic *Hellblazer,* and he brings the same strengths and weaknesses to *The Horrorist.* On the plus side are strong plotting, a real feel for the characters, an original take on the idea of what's horrific, and some nice dialogue. On the down side is the tendency to descend into purple prose when trying to describe magic, or intense personal feelings.

Art chores on *The Horrorist* are handled by veteran David Lloyd of *V for Vendetta* fame, using a murky, subdued palette and the borderless speech bubbles familar from *V.* His pub scenes, British streets and so on are very convincing; his America almost so, but not quite. Still, Lloyd is a fine artist, and it's nice to see him working on a big profile project again.

The Horrorist has much to recommend it, and although it's quite expensive, at least you feel like you're getting a decent amount for your money. If only all prestige format comics were the same.

A-


EVER HAD A TASTE OF SOME STRANGE, NEW DRUG, AND FELT IT RECOGNIZE YOU... MAKE LOVE WITH THE HEART OF YOU... BRING YOU ALIVE...?
AND THEN WHEN YOU CAME DOWN, YOU WERE RESTLESS... LONELY -- KNOWING YOU'D NEVER BE EASY--

John Constantine is a man obsessed. *Again.*

BLAST OFF!
THAT'S WHAT YOU THINK!

Rian Hughes

The month in COMICS

DREDD MEETS DC'S "MAIN MAN," PLUS CHARTS AND MORE...

JUDGE DREDD/LOBO: PSYCHO-BIKERS VS THE MUTANTS FROM HELL

Publishers: **Fleetway/DC**
Writers: **Alan Grant & John Wagner**
Artists: **Val Semeiks & John Dell**
Issues: **1 of 1**
Price: **£2.95** (£3.10 for the US version)
Text: **Matt Bielby**

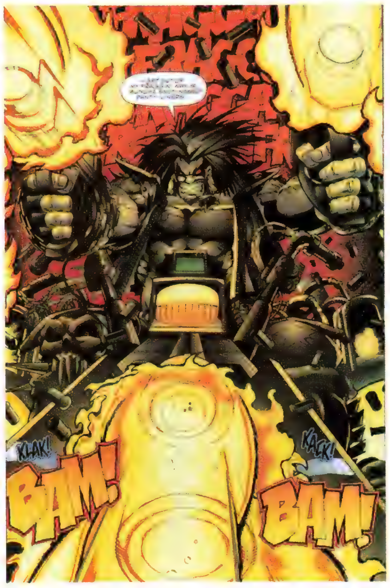
The latest *Judge Dredd*/DC crossover puts Mega City One's toughest lawman, by means of a handy inter-dimensional jump gate, up against "the main man" – Lobo, an ultra-violent bountry hunter from the future.

If you thought Dredd was one-dimensional, wait until you see Lobo – a kind of cardboard cut-out caricature of the hard drinkin', outlaw biker type, he could quickly get very tiresome indeed in the wrong hands. Luckily, Alan Grant and John Wagner are not the wrong hands. Between them they're massively familiar with both "heroes," and cobble together one of their "funny" offerings to hold them. This was never going to be particularly memorable, but it *is* fast and amusing.

What lets the side down are two things – the price (£2.95 seems a lot for a British comic with less story than two £1 issues of *2000AD);* and the art, which, though fine, would seem more suited to an American superhero story than something set in Mega City One. The story's simply too thin to justify this sort of presentation and cost.

So which version should you choose? Well, the British one will be easier to find, has a nicer cover (by Simon Bisley), is slightly cheaper, and, with its bigger, magazine format and slightly lighter printing, is easier to follow. DC's version, on the other hand, has a thick cover, a spine, and feels like it won't fall apart after five minutes. You pays yer money...

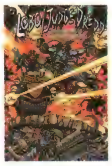
C+


KLAK!
BAM!
KACK!
BAM!

Judge Dredd is hardly the most well-rounded and subtle of characters, but Lobo really takes the biscuit. Here he is in a typically easy-going, happy-go-lucky mood.

Coming Soon

Shadowhawks of Legend **Out now**
Shadowhawk is of particular interest because he's the only superhero we can think of with full-blown AIDS. This one-shot sets the character in four different pre-HIV time zones (so you get a Wild West Shadowhawk, a samurai Shadowhawk and so on). Contributors include the great Alan Moore.



The Eaters **January**
Cosy little Vertigo Voices one-shot about a nice all-American family who just happen to be cannibals. Hmm, sounds delicious! By Peter Milligan and ex-*Dredd* artist Dean Ormston.

Best-selling Comics

Arrrgh! They're back!

We thought we'd been a bit mean to the ***X-Men*** of late, so we've decided to give them a reprieve and reinstate them in the comics chart this month. Meanwhile, the *X-Men*-alike ***Gen-13***, ***Fantastic Four***, ***Empire's End*** and ***Manbat*** are also doing well...

The Forbidden Planet Comic Chart

1 **Sabretooth Special** #1 Marvel
2 **Wolverine** #97 Marvel
3 **X-Force** #50 Marvel
4 **Gen-13** #6 Image
5 **Star Wars: Empire's End** #2 Dark Horse
6 **Fantastic Four** #408 Marvel
7 **Hellblazer** #97 DC
8 **Batman Manbat** #3 DC
9 **Batman: Shadow of the Bat** #40 DC
10 **Spider-Man Special** #230 Marvel

MODEL Reviews

> “An impressive, chunky kit that, if competently put together, should prove indistinguishable from the ‘real’ movie gun.”

JUDGE DREDD’S GUN THE LAWGIVER

Completely updated for the movie, Dredd’s weapon is some serious firepower...

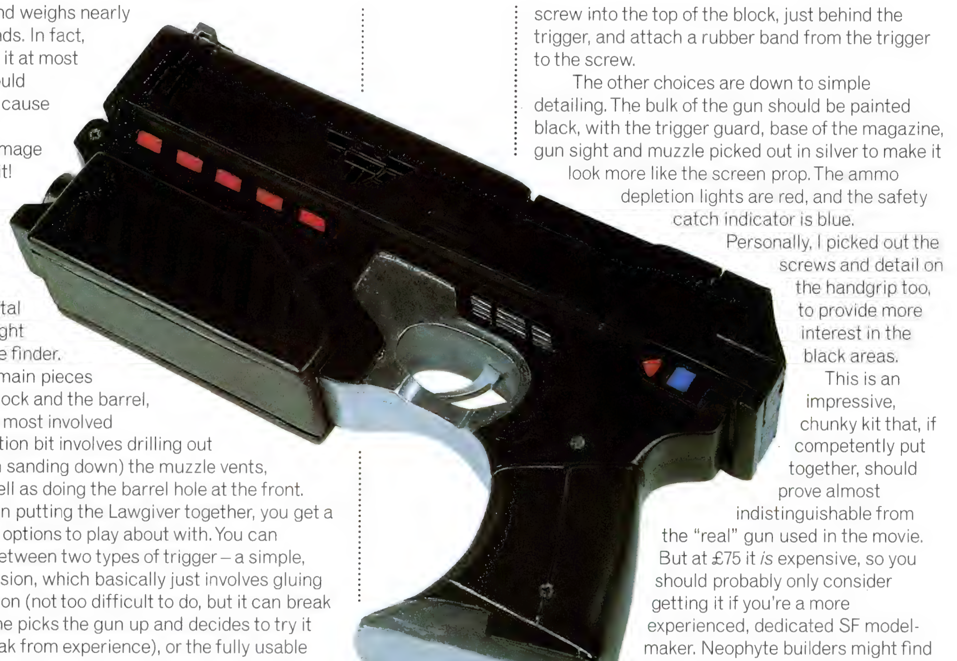
Manufacturer: **Reshape**
Price: **£75**
Contact: **Comet Miniatures ☎ (0171) 228 3702**
Special features: **Limited edition of 250**

Text: **Simon Chittenden**

Judge Dredd is a comic book legend, and, as with many other comic book heroes – Batman springs most readily to mind – the paraphernalia of his world has taken on a mythic power all its own. There are the sector houses, the Long Walk, the Lawmaster bikes... And the Lawgiver, Dredd’s awesome gun, of course. Originally designed as a slimline, Luger-like affair, the gun in the comics has become an unchangeable icon, despite complaints from the younger fans – in particular, the Bisley-influenced school of artists – that it’s simply too small for someone of Dredd’s stature.

It’s obviously a feeling shared by a lot of people, too, because, while everything – from bike to costume – was redesigned somewhat for the movie, the gun changed most of all. In fact, it’s pretty bloody unrecognisable.

The first thing you have to say about the new Lawgiver is that it’s ridiculously big – a massive lump of a handgun, black and evil-looking, and covered in little flashing lights. Now Reshape have come up with a limited edition, 1:1 scale model, and very impressive it is too. It’s robust, chunky, easy to build – and weighs nearly two pounds. In fact, throwing it at most perps would probably cause nearly as much damage as firing it!



The kit itself is made of resin, with a white metal trigger sight and range finder. The two main pieces are the block and the barrel, while the most involved construction bit involves drilling out (and then sanding down) the muzzle vents, and as well as doing the barrel hole at the front.

When putting the Lawgiver together, you get a couple of options to play about with. You can choose between two types of trigger – a simple, static version, which basically just involves gluing the thing on (not too difficult to do, but it can break if someone picks the gun up and decides to try it out; I speak from experience), or the fully usable version, which means drilling down through the gun block, and inserting a full-length trigger. By drilling through the barrel horizontally, and inserting a pin, you get a pivot. To get the trigger to spring back, you then have to put a self-tapping screw into the top of the block, just behind the trigger, and attach a rubber band from the trigger to the screw.

The other choices are down to simple detailing. The bulk of the gun should be painted black, with the trigger guard, base of the magazine, gun sight and muzzle picked out in silver to make it look more like the screen prop. The ammo depletion lights are red, and the safety catch indicator is blue.

Personally, I picked out the screws and detail on the handgrip too, to provide more interest in the black areas.

This is an impressive, chunky kit that, if competently put together, should prove almost indistinguishable from the “real” gun used in the movie. But at £75 it *is* expensive, so you should probably only consider getting it if you’re a more experienced, dedicated SF model-maker. Neophyte builders might find it a bit beyond them. (By the way, if you like the look of this, watch out for Reshape’s other *Dredd* kits, including Judge Hershey, due out early next year.)

B+

The month in MODELS

A NEW SEMI-REGULAR SERIES – CLASSIC KITS – PLUS TOYS 'N' MODELS COMING SOON...

Classic kit!

STARGATE'S ANUBIS

Manufacturer: **Horizon**
Price: **£97.50**
Contact: **Comet Miniatures, London**
Special features: **Limited edition of 4,000, each with a certificate of authenticity**
Text: **Simon Chittenden**

***Stargate*, eh? Controversy continues to rage over this one here at SFX, well over a year since this gloriously old-fashioned SF romp/embarrassing disappointment (delete as you feel applicable) hit the cinemas in the UK.**

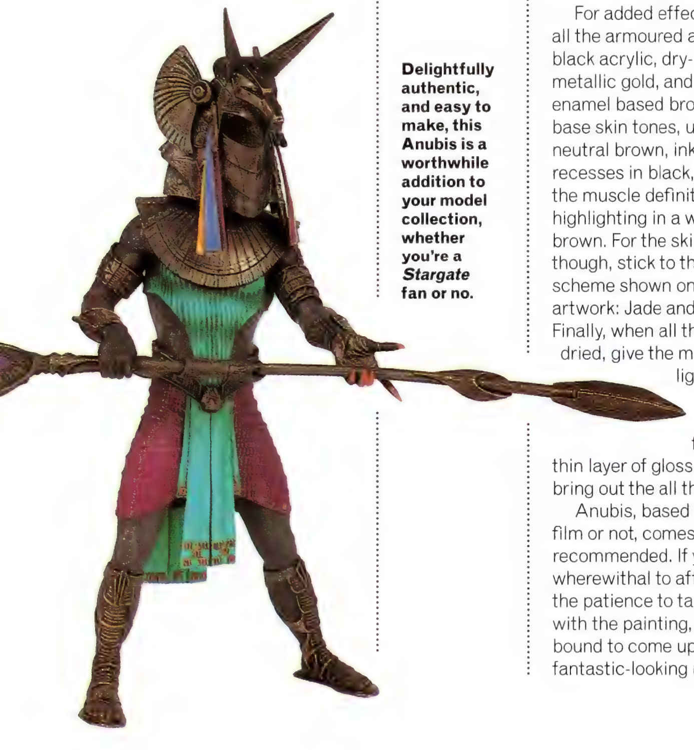
Still, we can all agree that at least one good thing has come from it – this brilliant model of Anubis from Horizon, a superb recreation of one of despotic alien Ra's warrior minions. Cast in resin, it stands a stately 15 inches tall and comes in 14 pieces – eight of which make up the head alone!

Finely sculpted and cast, this is a classic kit, and a real joy to make. There's hardly any excess resin, and the pieces fit together perfectly, with practically no filling or sanding down necessary. And once the figure's assembled, you can position the head and head-dress individually to give character and movement.

The model is superbly detailed too – delicate and complex, with some fine engravings embellishing the head-dress, neck ornament and armlets. The base, consisting of four pieces, is heavily patterned with Egyptian heiroglyphics. Cleverly, if you decide to invest in Ra and Horus – the other kits available in Horizon's *Stargate* set – all three bases fit together.

For added effect, base-coat all the armoured areas with black acrylic, dry-brush with metallic gold, and finally add enamel based bronze. For the base skin tones, use dark neutral brown, ink in the darkest recesses in black, and enhance the muscle definition by highlighting in a warm red-brown. For the skirt and vest, though, stick to the colour scheme shown on the box artwork: Jade and magenta. Finally, when all the paint's dried, give the metal areas a light wash with black ink, and then, finally, add a thin layer of gloss varnish to bring out the all the fine detail.

Anubis, based on a crap film or not, comes highly recommended. If you've got the wherewithal to afford this, and the patience to take your time with the painting, you're bound to come up with a fantastic-looking model. **A+**



Delightfully authentic, and easy to make, this Anubis is a worthwhile addition to your model collection, whether you're a *Stargate* fan or no.

Coming Soon

Reboot collectables
Irwin **Out now**
Small-scale, non-bendy, but well-made little models based on the *Reboot* characters (see Strange Tales this month, starting on page 4), including Bob, Dot, Enzo, Slash, Hack, Megabyte and more. Imported by Toy Options of Leeds.

Sil
Horizon **Out now**
A new 1/8th scale kit of the alien from *Species*, in all her HR Giger-designed glory. Should come in at around £50.

'50s Batmobile
Horizon **Out now**
Brilliantly evocative model of the version of the Batmobile that debuted in *Detective Comics* in the early '60s, modelled by Sen Maruyama, and measuring nearly nine inches long. It has a detailed interior, moving wheels – and, yes, looks like a '50s Studebaker with a ruddy great fin on the top!

Where's Your Sense Of *Humour*?

8.2.96

http://www.futurenet.co.uk/entertainment.html

NEW! The Comedy Magazine Comedy Review

NEW MEDIA Reviews

> "The superb speech and cinematic music does far more than embellish the atmosphere. It practically generates it."

THE DIG

Steven Spielberg unearths a gem on the PC...

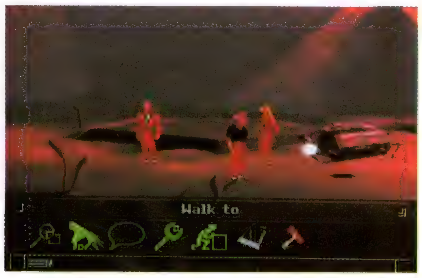
Format: **PC CD-ROM**
Publisher: **LucasArts, Virgin** ☎ (0171) 368 2255
Minimum system: **486/33, 8Mb RAM, 1Mb hard drive, double-speed CD-ROM drive, mouse**
Optional extras: **All major soundcards**
Price: **£44.99**

Text: **Mark Ramshaw**

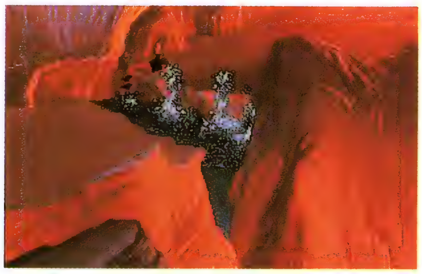
LucasArts' most ambitious graphic adventure to date was always in danger of getting buried under the weight of its own hype, but now, finally, it's with us. Originally conceived as a movie script by Steven Spielberg, the concept eventually fell into the hands of LucasArts some four years ago. After a couple of false starts, the tale can finally be told. And what a story it is.

There's initially some disappointment with *The Dig*. It's not, after all, the most graphically lush game to arrive on the PC. In purely technical terms, in fact, it appears to confirm fears that LucasArts is fast getting left behind by its one-time imitators. But hang on. Although the visuals are blocky, low-res VGA fare, the designers have obviously put a huge amount of work into the rendered sequences, animated characters, and hand-drawn, computer painted backdrops. It's not, however, the surface gloss that makes *The Dig* such an experience...

For one thing, there's that script – a brilliantly conceived piece of science fiction hokum which sends three astronauts into space in an attempt to change the trajectory of an incoming asteroid. What begins as a predictable attempt to detonate nuclear devices on the rock soon takes a number of twisty turns, the first being the discovery of alien handiwork, and the transportation of the trio to the surface of some faraway planet. It's all played out using voiceovers, with contributions from *Terminator 2's* Robert Patrick – as lead character Commander Low – among others, and the talents of author Orson Scott Card to ensure the dialogue actually carries conviction. This superbly acted speech, in conjunction with the beautiful cinematic music score, does far more than embellish the atmosphere. It practically generates it.



Help the three astronauts uncover what's going on.

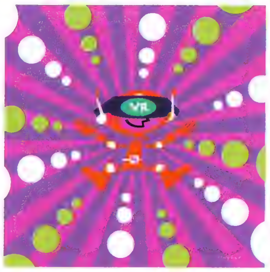


Odd alien goings-on underpin the action in *The Dig.*

It's the way you get to interact with this breath-taking story, though, that really shows LucasArts to be on top form. Every single command is pretty much two mouse button clicks away – the game effectively manages to guess what you want to do once you've selected a person or object. And even during the moments when the lead character gets into conversation with one of the other protagonists, you never feel like an uninvolved observer. Cinematic cut-scenes are extensively used to depict the major events, and much care has been taken throughout to ensure *The Dig* is a fully interactive experience, not just a spectacle.

The old-fashioned graphics and the straight-laced nature of the plot may disappoint fans of LucasArts' previous, more irreverent outings, but *The Dig* boasts something no other graphic adventure has ever had – a script of Hollywood calibre.

A



The month in NEW MEDIA

THE LATEST PLAYSTATION OFFERING IS ONE OF THE BEST...

WARHAWK

Format: **Sony PlayStation**
Producer: **Sony Computer Entertainment**
Developer: **SingleTrac**
Release: **Out now**
Price: **£44.99**
Text: **Steve Jarratt**

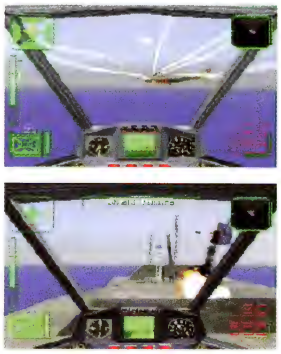
One of the sleepers of PlayStation's release schedule is this hype-less title from unknown US codeshop SingleTrac, a relatively new company founded by a group of ex-NASA programmers, aeronautical engineers and all-round smart-arses.

Their experience in 3D technology has been put to good use in this air combat game. Unlike anoraky PC flight sims, though, *Warhawk* is very much pick up and play, although ultimately it does demand some strategic planning and not just mindless blasting.

The SF theme is continued throughout by video sequences, both in-game and between missions, starring two hammy space pilots – a sort of budget version of Starbuck and Apollo.

A deceptively tough title, then, which might infuriate newer gamers. PlayStation veterans, however, will find the mixture of balls-out blasting and tactical gunplay both compelling and challenging.

B+



The graphics vary from the good to the brilliant, but the action is as fast-paced as you could want...

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Judge Dredd, Gerry Anderson, *Proteus*, Jeff Noon and *Wonder Woman.*
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Batman Forever, *Congo*, *Babylon 5*, Harry Harrison and Ed Bishop.
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SFX4
The X-Files, Christopher Priest, *Species*, *Blake's 7*, *Waterworld* and Adam West.
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23-page TV feature, Lis Sladen, *Judge Dredd* on the radio, Worldcon '95 and free art prints.
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Ray Harryhausen, Robert Rankin, BBC special effects, final days on *GoldenEye.*
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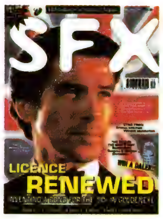
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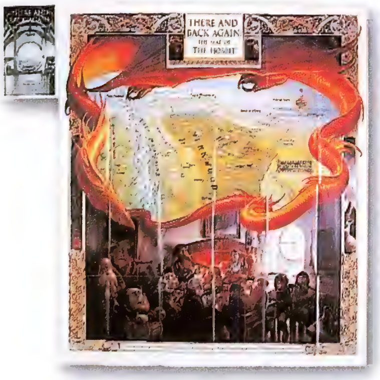
TOSH Reviews

> "Tolkien's original ink drawing of Mirkwood looked more interesting than this map's green smear, snapped from above by Eagle Photographic Services..."

THERE & BACK AGAIN

THE MAP OF THE HOBBIT



Author: **Brian Sibley**
Illustrator: **John Howe**
Publisher: **HarperCollins booklet**
Price/page count: **£4.99, 23pp** (plus fold-out map)
ISBN: **0-261-10326-1**

Text: **David Langford**

After the success of the Ankh-Morpork and Discworld "Mapps" by Stephen Briggs and Terry Pratchett, it's inevitable that other authors should leap aboard the bandwagon with similar map-books. So, here's one for that up-and-coming fantasist, JRR Tolkien...

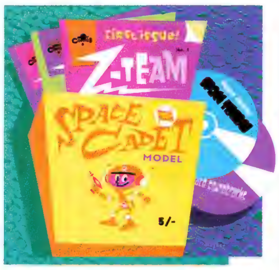
Alas, it's a disappointment, a kind of lesser version of *The Map of Tolkien's Middle-Earth* by the same publisher. Although Middle-Earth is well mapped, the unwritten rule here is that no geographical detail is included unless it's in Tolkien's own minimalist map for *The Hobbit.*

This rule is followed with insane literal-mindedness. Hobbiton, where Bilbo's adventure starts, obviously ought to be shown, but since Tolkien only had room for a westward-pointing arrow on his map, that's all we get here. His original ink drawing of Mirkwood looked far more interesting than this map's "realistic" green smear, apparently snapped from above by Eagle Photographic Services, too.

And instead of filling out the 29-inch x 28-inch poster with detail from Thror's map of The Lonely Mountain, as featured in the original book, the publishers have – God knows why – opted instead for some pointless framing devices: An elaborate border and title, a dragon, and a curiously naff picture of the dwarfs' songfest in Bilbo's house.

The slim booklet offers a terse plot summary of *The Hobbit,* a few well-known snippets of publishing history, some descriptions of places, a letter written in runes by Tolkien, and a plug for the more detailed map. Bilbo's expedition must have had a copy of the latter, or they'd never have reached the edge of Hobbiton, let alone The Lonely Mountain...

C



The month in TOSH

Quirky SF gear that's got nowhere else to go. Sniff.

TRIVIAL PURSUIT: STAR TREK EDITION

Distributor: **Telstar Video**
Price: **£19.99**
Available: **Out now**
Text: **Dave Golder**

Years ago, when the original Trivial Pursuit came out and the world went Trivia crazy, I saw an interview with one of the game's creators on TV. What he said then about setting trivia questions made a lot of sense...

"Don't ask, 'How many dimples does a golf ball have?'", he said. "Ask, 'What piece of sporting equipment has 210 dimples?'" In other words, give people a clue in the question...

This is not a lesson the makers of *Star Trek* Trivial Pursuit have taken to heart. Instead of, "What must Spock do when he reaches Pon Farr?", for instance, you get, "What is the name of the Vulcan mating cycle?" It makes most of the questions impossible to answer unless you're a *Trek* freak.

What you get for your money is a video packed with clips from the original *Trek* series and the first six films, plus a pack of questions, which all refer to these clips (you have to supply your own board). Categories include Name the Episode, Who?, General Trivia, Stop, and What Place/Event/Object? The favourite category among the group of casual Trekkers I played with, however, was Observation – at least with that one *everyone* stood a chance. Tragic, really. *Trek* should be for all SF lovers, not just anorak heads.

C

X-FILES TRADING CARDS

Manufacturer: **Topps**
UK distributor: **CMA**
Price: **£1.50 for pack of nine**
Text: **MJ Simpson**

These trading cards could have been an exciting addition to the ever-growing *X-Files* merchandise range, or a bit of a rip-off. In the end, they fall about halfway.

The 72 cards are divided into seven sections, of which the most interesting is "Production," which features sketches for aliens, UFOs, etc. Card quality is well up to Topps' usual standard – and "insert" and "chase cards" are included if you're into that sort of thing. Hardcore *X-Philes* will enjoy them, I'm sure, but the appeal to the rest of us is limited.

C+

Rian Hughes

SHOWSTOPPERS, SONTARANS & THE JONES BOY

DATA SINGS, SONTARANS GO '70S AND RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK GETS EXTENDED – ALL ON CD.

RAIDERS OF THE LAST ARK

Company: **Silva Screen**
Price: **£14.49**

B+

SHAKEDOWN

Company: **Silva Screen**
Price: **£8.99**

C-

OL' YELLOW EYES IS BACK

Company: **Stargazer Productions**
Price: **£15.99**

C+

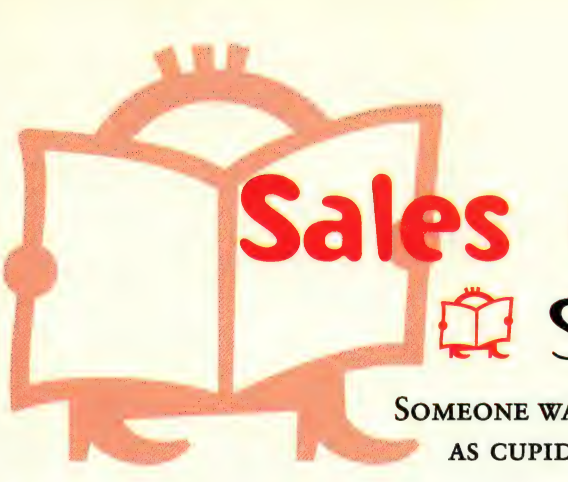
Text: **Cavan Scott**

First we got extended video releases. Now we get extended soundtracks. This special edition of John Williams' *Raiders of the Lost Ark* comes complete with the music that was edited out of the original recording. It's been donkey's years since I saw the film, so I was surprised to realise how much of this I actually remembered. While listening, and flicking through the glossy 24-page booklet, memories of spider-clad guides and avenging angels jogged into view – it's classic Williams stuff, and good enough to hold its own without the images.

RAIDERS
BRENT SPINER
OL' YELLOW EYES IS BACK

Shakedown, by contrast, is the soundtrack to a cheap 'n' cheerful fan-produced 1994 *Doctor Who* spin-off, featuring the Sontarans. According to the insert, composer Mark Ayres tried to reflect '70s *Who* in the score. Sadly, *Who* isn't exactly renowned for its incidental music, and in trying to emulate the radiophonic farty noises of the Pertwee era, Ayres unwittingly emphasises the banality of his main theme.

The last CD in this bunch is rather bizarre. *Ol' Yellow Eyes is Back* (previously available only on import) isn't a soundtrack, but rather a chance for Brent Spiner (alias Data from *The Next Generation*) to croon a few classics to his heart's content. Being a sucker for such sentimental showstoppers as "Time after Time" and "When I Fall in Love," I loved it!



Sales of the Uncanny

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Mags for sale: *Starlog, Starburst, Cinescape, Empire, Premiere, TV Zone,* etc. Send wants lists with SAE to: A Ali, 14 Champion Grove, London SE5 8BW

Star Trek *The Next Gen* books 1-31 + 5 giant novels, & *Far Point, Relics & Unification.* All as new £80. Phone ☎ (01582) 452 811 after 7pm

Lovecraftian T-shirts, exclusively produced from Shadows Over Innsmouth illustrations, all on XL black shirts: Cthulhu (green), Dagon (blue), Mother Hydra (red). £10 each. Add £1.50 p&p for first, 50p each additional. Martin McKenna, 27 Haworth Rd, Rishton, Lancs. BB1 4HZ

Sci-fi mags: *Doctor Who, Interzone, DWB, X-Files,* etc. SAE for list to: Darren Powis, 38 Camrose Walk, Cwbran, Gwent NP44 4NN

SW Dark Empire 1-6, £10 set + p&p. *SW From Concept to Collectable,* £7 + p&p. Boba Fett standee £16 + p&p. *Behind the Mask:* sfx make-up, *Predator, Aliens,* etc. £7 + p&p. Phone ☎ (01956) 867727

Doctor Who videos, 19 in total. List & prices available on request. Ben Pope, South Cottage, Conock, Devizes, Wilts SN10 3QQ

Brent Spiner's (Data – *ST:TNG) Ol' Yellow Eyes is Back* CD & cassette. Plus a range of merchandise. Please send an SAE to: Donna & Dawn Macey, 66 Albert Rd, Worcester, Worcs. WR5 1EB

Radio Times collection for sale, mint condition, 1953-89: *Quatermass, Doctor Who, Adam Adamant, Doomwatch, Star Trek, Man From UNCLE, The Beatles, The Monkees,* start Radio One. send SAE for list to: A Chuter, 83 Weybourne Rd, Varnham, Surrey GU9 9EX

Sci-fi, fantasy & horror vids, mags, books, etc for sale or swap. Good condition. Philip, 148 Ulsterville Pk, Portadown, Co. Armagh, NI, BT63 5HD

Uncanny X-Men comics for sale, send SAE for list. Also cards available. Send to: Michael Blencowe, 55 Dyke Rd Ave, Hove, East Sussex

Manga posters! Large collection for sale. Mint condition. Mailed in strong cardboard tubes. Also manga-related promotional goods. Send SAE for prices to C Brackenridge, 5c Stuart Hse, Burns Rd, Kildrum, Cumbernauld, Glasgow G67 2AN

VHS videos – *Batman Returns, Doctor Who.* Comics – Marvel, indies. *Doctor Who* items. Novels – Wyndham, Aldiss, Fleming. SAE for info; state interests. (Amiga owners – send disk for complete list of hundreds of items.) Mark Saunders, Villa Nova, High St, Godshill, IOW.

Comics for sale including *The X-Files,* Marvel, DC, & Image. Over £3,000 worth will sell for £700. Separate orders will be accepted. Also cards for sale including *Magic: The Gathering, Over Power, Star Trek* & comic related cards. Phone ☎ (0171) 474 5307

ST:TNG/X-Files for sale. *ST:TNG* customizable card game cards both borders for sale or trade & trading cards. *X-Files* cards & rare comics for sale. Please send SAE with wants/trades to Jacky at: 47 Surrey Rd, Reading, Berks RG2 0EU

Trading cards, *Empire Strikes Back* 1980. *Knightrider* 1982 & *Magnum PI* 1983. Call or write for more details. Michele Thomas, 3b Rayleigh Rd, Coombe Dingle, Bristol BS9 2AU; ☎ (0117) 9498973

Star Trek, *Doctor Who, Blake's 7* & more. Magazines, comics, photos, autographs & paperbacks for sale. SAE to GW Williams, 31 Maes-Y-Glyn, Colwyn Bay, Clwyd LL29 8RE

Star Trek trading cards for sale, assorted singles & customisable card game singles (lots of rare cards e.g. Thomas Riker). Bargain prices. Phone Antonia ☎ (01782) 644002 (evenings or weekends only).

Comic collection for sale. 1,000s of Marvel, DC, also *2000AD, Starlord, Starburst* from 25p. Phone ☎ (01543) 410934 or write to: K Ford, 39 Wissage Rd, Lichfield, Staffs WS13 6SW

Videos for sale: *Star Wars, Return of the Jedi, Star Trek: TNG* #89, *DS9* #1-5, 10 & 11 & *Voyager* #1. All for £5 each! Cheques/POs to V Singh, 31 Kingswood Ave, Queen's Park, London NW6 6LR

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Space: 1999 Eagle command module with detailed undercarriage – a stunning piece for £400. Phone Gerry on ☎ (013552) 49486 (evenings only).

Astounding Stories. *Analog, Vargo Staaten, Amazing SF* & others. 10 titles, 270 magazines, £140 the lot, Jan '41 – Jan '71. Will not break, but might deliver, depending on area. Nick Miles, 8 Downend Rd, Horfielf, Bristol BS7 9PF

Interzone magazines for sale: Issues 1-4, 6, 8-15, 21-65. VGC. Offers for lot to: Bruce Pilbeam, 9 Jonas Dr, Wadhurst, East Sussex TN5 6RJ

For sale or trade. *X-Files & B5* trading cards. Two complete *X-Files* sets available. *B5* holograms & card 81 wanted. Write with SAE for list to Adrian Thompson, 1 Foster Ave, Silsden, W Yorks BD20 9LG

Starburst, *Starlog, Doctor Who Magazine, Star Wars* Weekly. SAE for list. Mark Stuart, Millcroft, Kilmorack, Bybeauly, Inverness-shire IV4 7AL

X-Files No.1, US edition by Topps – £60. Also *X-Files* Nos. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Will accept offers. Ben Beck, 28 Florence St, Barrow-in-Furness, Cumbria LA14 2DB

Captain Scarlet. Complete set (20) of rare Edward Sharp & Sons trade cards. Catalogue £90, but make me an offer. Ring ☎ (01225) 837233 evenings.

Star Wars original artwork for sale: Cover off *ROTJ* weekly #28 '83 Xmas special also on Topps trading card #156. Framed. £400. Must sell to buy boyfriend Xmas presents! Judith Stanley, 91 Errol St, Aigburth, Liverpool L17 7DH

Full set of *X-Files* season one trading cards £9. X3 chase card £5.75. i4, i5, i6 chase cards £4.75 each. Lawry Simm, 25 Blisworth St, Litherland, Merseyside L21 8JE

Star Wars: Collector selling off extensive collection. Boxed vehicles, figures & much more. David Devenney, Eden Cottage, 26 Well St, Cupar, Fife KY15 4AX

Batman graphic novels for sale. Over 40 titles, including *Digital Justice, Dark Knight Returns & Killing Joke.* All excellent quality. £150 the lot. Will sell separately. Mark Last, 21 Gibbons Cl, The Hill North, Coventry, W Mids. CV4 9RA

Comics for sale: *X-Files, Generation X, Angela, Violator, Preacher, Sandman.* Send wants list with SAE to Mat, 61 Ashworth Park, Knutsford, Ches. WA16 9DG

ST:TNG Customizable Card Game black border cards for sale, or will swap for black border rares. Also some white borders available. Contact Nick King at 44 Swans Court, High St, Waltham Cross, Herts. EN8 7BH

Star Trek paperback books approx 200. Covered with slip-on clear dust covers. Novels & infobooks. £160 the lot. Robin Williams, Brambly Hedge, Mill Lane, swat, Hants SO41 8LN

Over 200 titles available: Sci-fi, horror & fantasy films (1950-64) on new, factory-boxed videotapes (VHS, NTSC) + many US magazines: *FilmFax, Psychotronic, Cult Movies,* etc. For complete list, please write to: Albert Bouyat, 34 Avenue de la Bourdonnais, 75007 Paris, France

Comics for sale *(Sandman, 2000AD, Judge Dredd)* + loads of RPG stuff (D&D, AD&D, Cyberpunk, Paranoia). Also some computer mags (PC, Atari, Spectrum) First come, first served. Please send SAE for list/order form to Cerrie, 55 School Lane, Bidston, Wirral L43 7RE

Magic: The Gathering collection for sale – many discontinued cards, for bulk sale only. Enquiries, please phone ☎ Mark (0181) 578 1097

Private collection of horror/sci-fi mags inc. *Hammer House of horror* (vol.1, no.1 – 1976), *Doctor Who* annual (1965), *Blake's 7* (1979), *Monster World* (USA no.1, 1964). Send SAE for full list to Brian Rake, 72 Northampton Ave, Slough SL1 3BN

WANTED

***Star Wars* trilogy** – mint Palitoy/Kenner carded/boxed figures/vehicles/playsets; trading cards/stickers; comics/mags/books; anything. *X-Files* – anything. *Doctor Who* – books; mags (esp "CToyroom"); videos; toys; comics; trading cards; anything. S Blackmore, 4 Acacia House, Douglas Rd, Wood Green, London N22 5RS

Anything on Michael Brandon & Glynis Barber. I would welcome penpals who are fans of theirs, *Bugs* or *X-Files.* Miss Jan Green, 27 Ladysmith Ave, East Ham, London E6 3AP

Wanted – Anything at all to do with *Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman,* especially Dean Cain. Send to Sandra White, 7 Exeter Rd, Wittering, Peterborough PE8 6DA

Any items on Richard Hatch, videos, photos, cuttings, especially *Battlestar Galactica, Streets of San Francisco.* Buy/swap for other star items. Write to Rosie Adams, Montana, Herne Rd, Crowborough, East Sussex TN6 2NX

Stop! Throw nothing out from *The X-Files.* You could send it to me. Write what you want, and I'll see what I've got. Bianca Blokland, Esdoorndreef 101, 3137 BK, Ubardinge, The Netherlands

Anything on *Wurzel Gummidge, Planet of the Apes, ALF, Knight Rider, Bewitched, V.* Send price & details to: D Harper, 33 Talbot Rd, Rickmansworth, Herts WD3 1HD

VHS videos: *Doctor Who* (official BBC – Troughton through Davison Doctors), *Nightbreed, Kolchak, The Forbin Project, The Man Who Haunted Himself.* Widescreen only: *Bond, Star Wars, Trek, Indy Jones,* etc. Mark Saunders, Villa Nova, High St, Godshill, IOW

I am an *X-Men* fan and collect Fleer 95 cards. I need metallic Storm, Rogue, Wolverine. I have a pile of swaps you may need! Or will pay money (negotiate price). Paul Chapman, 13 Montford Close, Shoreham-by-Sea, W Sussex BN43 6YP

Attention!! I am looking for any info, research material, literature, etc. that could help my dissertation on the representation of women in SF films. Thanks! Michelle Manley, 58 Neville Rd, Erdington, Birmingham B23 7SB

Alfred Hitchcock *& the Three Investigators* mystery series hardback books wanted. Cash waiting! Phone ☎ (0141) 569 7193

Help! I missed several episodes from series two of *Babylon 5.* Can someone help me here? Tapes provided; Ireland if possible but not essential. Contact Aidan McQuaid, 4 Corlatt, Scotstown, Co. Monaghan, Eire. Phone ☎ (00353) 047 89725 after 8pm

***Doctor Who* novels:** *K9 & Company, Mysterious Planet, Macra Terror, Edge of Destruction, Romans, Mindwarp, Vengeance on Varos.* Also other rare ones. Reasonable prices paid. Contact by mail. Owen Walton, 21 Alton Way, Ashby de la Zouch, Leics. LE65 1ER

Recording of 1938 Orson Welles radio version of *War of the Worlds,* posters from 1953 movie & season two of 1990 TV series. Jim Perrin, 28B Bromley Rd, Beckenham, Kent BR3 2JD

Babylon 5 trading cards, swaps wanted. Send lists to: 31 Lindley St, Mansfield, Notts NG18 1QE

I am willing to pay reasonable prices for issues #1 & #2 of the Manga *X-Files* magazine. Please write to: Miss C Robinson, 3 Bembridge Close, Rusholme, Manchester MC14 5WX

Wanted: Jan Michael Vincent, Sherilyn Fenn & Burt Ward films & TV episodes, inc. *The Winds of War* "Renegade" TV episode & anything else like autographs, pictures, newspaper & magazine articles. Andrew Pope, 14 Oakwood Cl, Stevenage, Herts SG2 9QU

Micronauts figures: Acroyear 1 & 2 /Repto/ Membros/Antron/Space Glider/Galactic Defender. Preferably with packs. Mattel Matt Mason "Scorpio" figure. Triang Spacex II toys (any condition). Japanese Zoids. B Bulloch, 77 Ferndale Birch Green, Skelmersdale, Lancs. WN8 6QY

Desperately wanted: Any info/photos on *X-Files.* Autographs, merchandise, anything. Willing to swap or pay for photos. Write to: 7 Cranleigh Cres, Chester CH1 5DR or phone ☎ (01244) 376719. Ask for Lindsey.

Wanted! David Duchovny or if that proves too difficult – posters, interviews, articles or any *X-Files* memorabilia. If you have any then please write to Cressida McLaughlin, 23 Balcaskie Rd, Eltham, London SE9 1HQ I am waiting for your letter.

I am looking for *Man from UNCLE* books 12-23. Also looking for *Man/Girl from UNCLE* magazines. Erica Whittle, 1 The Potteries, Ditchling Common, E Sussex BN6 8SJ

Super 8/VHS copies of '60s Marvel cartoon series *(Spider-Man, Thor, Capt. America, Hulk, Iron Man, Sub-Mariner)* & any '60s Anderson Lyons Maid ads – good prices paid. Jim Fielding, 17 Springate Field, Langley, Slough, Berks SL3 7DH

X-Files promo cards P1, P2, P3; also *Alien Nation* TV episodes 1-4. Please write with details. Thanks. Nick Ryder, 1 Birch Rd, Rushden, Northants. NN10 0JR

Impact comics *The Fly* Nos. 6 & 7. Also Impact annual *The Comet Earth Quest 3.* JD Stephens, 49 Haywood Rd, Barton Hill, Bristol, Avon BS5 9PX

Can anyone help me get hold of the original film *Nosferatu?* I am willing to pay a reasonable price. Caroline Peacock, 30 Kingsthorpe Grove, Kingsthorpe, Northampton NN2 6NT

1988 *Judge Dredd* annual wanted. Large amounts of money in return. Please write to: M Murray, 92 Mays Wood Gardens, Dagenham, Essex RM10 8UT

***Babylon 5* comic** – issues #4 & #5. Can you help? Please write to: J Martinez, 11 Croydon Gdns, Marnio, Dublin 3, Ireland. Thank you.

Wanted – the two *Survivors* novels. the first one is by Terry Nation, the second by John Eyers. Also wanted, uncut episodes of season two & three of *Survivors.* Steven Gunn, 43 Glenburn Drive, Inverness IV2 4NE

Desperately needed! *X-Files* magazines, issues 1 & 2, anything else on *The X-Files* & penpals interested in *X-Files,* sci-fi or horror. Write to: Rebecca Golby, 1 Conway Rd, Cannock, Staffs WS11 1PH

FANZINES

The RoboFiles: Booklet of short stories & essays concerning the world of robots & artificial life. Send cheque/PO for £4, payable to RD Evans, to: Apt.1, 72 Derbyshire Rd, Manchester M33 3EL

AUTON 14 – new look issue. 32 litho-printed pages includes an interview with Ian Scoones, plus loads of childish humour & rubbish. Send a cheque for £2 made to ROBERT HAMMOND at: Auton, 82 Farncombe St, Godalming, Surrey GU7 3LN

Alice Cooper unofficial fanzine – first issue, featuring history of Alice, transcribed radio interview, info on forthcoming box set. £2 + 40p p&p. Contributions are also welcome. Lee Davey, 30 Meadowside Rd, Sandford, Crediton, Devon EX17 4NN

New *Twin Peaks* fanzine – *Fish in the Percolator.* Issue 2 & subs available now. Cheques for £1.90 made payable to Mr S Franks-Delenty at Wits End, Welford Rd, South Kilworth, Leicester LE17 6DY. "It is happening again."

Movieworld #2 out now – 24pp of sci-fi/horror movies & videos: *Species, Mortal Kombat, Candyman 2, Proteus, Crow 2, Twelve Monkeys,* features, news, etc. £1 cheque/PO/coin to: Kenneth Knowles, Tower View, King's Newnham Rd, Church Lawford, Rugby CV23 9EP

Banish all prickling sensations with *Black Scrolls of Rassilon* #5 (A4, 32pp), inc. fame/shame judgement: Adric & Turlough; Troughton filmography; Beers with Morbius & more. £2.30 (inc p&p) to: G Kavanagh, Friarsmede, Abbey Place, Llandudno. Hmm, very bracing!

Unlock the secrets of *The Holocron!* Britain's only *Star Wars* fanzine. New fiction, amusing & insightful articles, a few nice pictures, exclusive reader album offer. £1 + SAE from Neil Bristow, 36 Glen Douglas Rd, Greenock, Scotland PA16 9NY

Thermal Lance. Issue 27 features *The X-Files, Doctor Who* – has it survived the '90s?, *Apollo 13* reviewed. Plus much more. 32 A5 pages, £1.20 all cheques/POs payable to Thermal Lance, 6 Vale Mills, Boyer St, Derby DE22 3TE

Free to good homes: Popular youth magazine *The Pulse.* Includes articles on *The X-Files,* Bruce Lee, anime, etc. plus sport, computers. Please send A4 SAE (50p worth of stamps) to Harry Winckworth, Meadow View, Main Rd, Goulceby, Louth, Lincs. LN11 9VT

***The Supernova* #1** – time travel, black holes, stories, art & poetry. Monthly issues, send £1 to: Tim Mewton, 4 Cowage Farm Cottages, Foxley, Wiltshire SN16 0JH

New *X-Files* fanzine: If you're interested in contributing to a brand new *X-Files*/paranormal fanzine send absolutely anything (articles/essays/news/artwork) to: Graham Dell, Room 3, Avro Hall, Student Village, Farnborough College, Farnborough Rd, Farnborough, Hants GU14 6TA

Sonic Screwdriver Sontaran Special – "S.S.S.S. That's a bit OTT, isn't it?" No.9 full of reviews, fiction, murder & mayhem, costs £1.60 from Steven Grace, 63 Stanley Gdns, Herne Bay, Kent CT6 5SQ

***RQC* #2** – original SF/fantasy fiction plus: *Thunderbirds, Trek, Who,* humour & reviews, Peake vs Gibson. £1.80 from Gavin Wilson, 18 Worcester Dr, Didcot, Oxfordshire OX11 8UP

***TV Fuzz* sci-fi cult fanzine.** *X-Files* etc. For issue, send cheque/PO for £2 to AJ McKirdy, 20 MacDonald Walk, Balloch, Scotland G83 8QH

***Faze* issues 1, 2**, both £1 only this month: *Doctor Who, Voyager, B5,* music, humour, life cheques payable John Connors, 8 Henley Rd, Liverpool L18 2DW

Substance, 56pp A4, ed. Paul Beardsley. ("Puts many professional magazines to shame": *Matrix)* #3 features Stephen Baxter, David Pringle, Molly Brown, David Redd. Artwork by Debs Dumbrell, Rick Dawson, colour cover. £2.50/issue, £9/4. payable to Neville Barnes, 65 Conbar Ave, Rustington, W Sussex BN16 3LZ

***Red Dwarf* fanzine** – *The Inquisitor.* Run by fans for fans. News, reviews, interviews, competitions + other sci-fi reports & reviews. The ultimate fanzine. Issues £1.50 each plus A4 SAE. Cheques/POs to: NIRDA, 17 Forthill Dr, Newtownabbey, Co.Antrim, NI BT36 6QR

Blinkers Off – A fanzine with no fixed horizon. Issue 1 winds its way from *Lost in Space to Sgt Bilko.* £1.50 (inc. p&p) to: Paul Arthur, 31 Music House Lane, Norwich NR1 1QL

Charnel House, a new adult horror/fantasy/sci-fi magazine. I require stories & artwork to produce my vision of Hell. Send SAE for information. Luthers, PO Box 29, Scaithwaite, Huddersfield, W Yorks. HD7 5YL

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Saccade, the magazine of bizarre & fantastic fiction. Issue 6 features five stories, poetry, A-Z of weird fiction, *Point Horror,* Brad Dourif, artwork & more. Only £1.75 from R Gill, 212 Stannington View Rd, Crookes, Sheffield S10 1ST

The X-Files File: The ultimate episode guide & reference. 60 A4 pages covering both seasons. £2.95 + 50p p&p, or SAE for more info, to: Adrian Thompson, 1 Foster Ave, Silsden, Keighley, W Yorks BD20 9LG

Delos Cyberzine: The first & unique SF monthly e-zine in Italian. Available in Internet: http://www.cyberg.it/delos ww & nationwide news, videos, interviews (e.g. Matt Bielby, Adams, McCaffrey, etc), plus much more.

PENPALS

Hi, my name is Lee Allen & I am a 17 year old male *Star Wars, Batman, X-Files* & *Superman* fan. I would like to meet fans of the above to chat etc. from my area. Write: 32 Raby Way, Byker, Newcastle NE6 2FB

Doctor Who & *X-Files* fan, male, aged 16, seeks female penpal of similar age. If you believe the truth is out there, contact Andrew Weston, 5 Camden St, Gosport, Hants

Calling all X-Philes. My name is Jillian and I'm 13. I love *The X-Files,* and would like a fellow fan to talk to. Contact Jillian, 14 Muirside Ave, Kirkintilloch, Glasgow G66 3PR

33 year old "sci-fi/music freak," stuck in TARDIS since 1989, would like to hear from "older female fans," fanzines, conventions, clubs, etc via "The Time Tunnel." Cris Robinson, 8 Oxford Cres., New Malden, Surrey KT3 5QL

Sci-fi girl wants to hear from anyone who likes *The X-Files,* Stephen King & all that stuff, *Star Trek,* etc. etc. Anything to do with sci-fi. Sally, 21 Stoney Rd, Grundisbergh, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP13 6RD

Strange being, (F) 16 Earth years, seeks male *Star Wars, QL, X-Files, Red Dwarf, Eerie Indiana* & *seaQuest* fans to communicate with using the inferior pen & paper. Must be over 16. Jessica, 12 Calderton Rd, Gwaun Misken, Beddaw, Mid-Glam CF38 2LL

Star Wars, *X-Files* & general sci-fi guy would like female to write, meet in the Scotland area, especially if you collect Kenner *Star Wars* figures & ships. Steven Scouller, 79 Keppenburn Ave, Fairlie, Ayrshire KA29 0BA

Are there any female *X-Files* fans out there? If there is, drop me a line if you're around 17. Scott Adcock, 36 North Park Rd, Erdington, Birmingham B23 7YD

Female, 23 into *X-Files, Twin Peaks,* horror films, nightclubs and photography would like to hear from males in the London, South East & Kent area. Sasa, 96 Lonsdale Dr, Rainham, Gillingham, Kent ME8 9HZ

A female who loves sci-fi, aged 16, would like males into sci-fi aged 16+ to write long letters to. I don't mind what other interests you have. A reply is guaranteed. Ellen Butcher, 15 The Crescent, Mitcheldean, Glos. GL17 0SB

I would like to write to anyone interested in comics, SFX, sci-fi & cards & who is 16 or above. Write to Danny Lane, 16 Dixon Close, Beckton, London E6 4QF

X-Files fan, female, aged 15, would like a penpal to talk to about *X-Files*/sci-fi & life in general. Leyna Stewart, 3 St James Close, Friarscourt, Hawarden, Clwyd CH5 3QL

I am a devoted *X-Files* fan. I would to hear from anyone who likes *The X-Files*/*Star Wars*/UFOs/*ET*, etc. Darren Rae, 2 Church St, Kilwinning, Ayrshire KA13 6BE

Penpals wanted, male/female/alien for four people (15). Fans of *X-Files, Red Dwarf,* vampires, etc. & are trying to find the meaning of life. Help is needed! Send photo if poss. Kryceks need not apply. J.A.R.N., 50 Magdalen Rd, St Leonards-on-Sea, E Sussex TN37 6EU

Mulder seeking Scully. Are you 18+ female interested in *X-Files, DS9, B5* & sci-fi in general & would like to write to a 27 year old about life, Forteana & everything? All letters answered. Phil Jones, 12 Hayon Ave, Stanley, Wakefield, W Yorks WF3 4QJ

Die-hard *DS9*-er, 31 (F), would like to write to other fans of the show. Christine Collins, 38 Newcastle Cl, Stevenage, Herts. SG1 4TL

I am a 21 year old frustrated revolutionary in need of sci-fi discussion. I like Banks, Gibson, Rice, *X-Files* & *Blake's 7.* I am the only person I know who ever watched *Eerie, Indiana.* Claire Milhench, 10 Oakhead, Leigh, Lancs. WN7 3EE

Australian SF fan would like UK pen pals around my age, 28. Favourites include *Star Wars,* original *Trek, UFO, Space: 1999.* Also a fan of Tom Cruise, D:Ream & Madonna. Write to: Wedge Dare, PO Box 3878, Parramatta NSW 2124, Australia

X-Files fan, female, age 15, would like male penpal 15+ to meet, have fun with, in the Cambridge area. Send photo. Contact Sarah Long, 98 Medcalfe Way, Melbourne, Nr Royston, Herts SG8 6HU

Male 16, greatly interested in the *Highlander* films & series, seeks penpal to swap news, views & ideas. Age & sex irrelevant. Nick Turley, 158, The Ridgeway, North Harrow, Middx HA2 7DD

13 year old girl looking for someone (same age) to share interest in *X-Files* & other cult TV shows & who likes David Duchovny & believes in extra-terrestrials. Trust no1. Ceri Williams, 51 Mayfield Dr, Buckley, Clwyd CH7 2PL

Wanted: anyone into *Babylon 5* & *War of the Worlds* (brill series). Females especially welcome! Also into NIN, L7, HR Giger, *X-Files,* Dredd, horror films, especially Romero! Paul Goddard, 30 Charles St, Newport, Gwent NP9 1ST

Scully, age 13, seeks Mulder, must be 13-14. Address is Clough Cottage, South Ormsby Rd, Tetford, Nr Horncastle, Lincs LN9 6QF

Anyone interested in new wave of SF, e.g. P K Dick, Norman Spinrad, Harlan Ellison, PJ Farmer & anyone into *The Twilight Zone* & *Voyager.* Keith Parker, 96 Sandhurst Rd, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN2 3JX

Russian *Star Wars*/sci-fi fan (23) would like to find penpals all around the world. Nadia Whitham, Mira Str 6-25, Perm 614066, Russia

Female, 16, college student into all *Trek, X-Files, B5,* Oasis, Echobelly, Elastica, Salad, etc. In need of male/female 16+ for "intelligent" conversation. Response to all replies. Jen Hosking, 28 Sandpiper Close, Marchwood, Southampton, Hants. SO40 4XN

Male 25 would like to correspond with penpals from outside England on films, TV, books, etc. Any age, any subject. Please write! Tim Whitfield, Flat 5, 8 Wellington Cres., Ramsgate, Kent, CT11 8JL, UK

Male, 19, likes *Doctor Who, X-Files, Star Wars* & *Star Trek* when I'm in the mood. Anybody want to drop me a line and talk Mulder to me? Steve Stratford, 15 Cleveland Terrace, Darlington, Co. Durham DL3 7HD

Male, 17, fan of *X-Files, Trek,* SF movies, Therapy?, Offspring & role-play would like fellow female fan to chat with. Photos please, reply guaranteed. Steven Hindley, 21 Churchfields, Hethersett, Norwich, Norfolk NR9 3AF

Male, 22, seeks male/female penpals, any age. Mainly interested in Irwin Allen TV shows – *Land of the Giants, Voyage to the Bottom of the Sea, Lost in Space.* Also photography, telling jokes & enjoying life. Write! Billy Nicol, 32 Stewartville St, Partick, Glasgow G11 5PJ

Philosophical 16 year old girl likes *The X-Files, Red Dwarf,* Stephen King, Christopher Pike, sci-fi movies & more. Intrigued male? Write! Helen Treby, 14 Sweetbriar Crescent, Newquay, Cornwall TR7 2JP

Male age 22 into *B5, DS9, X-Files* & most sci-fi in general seeks females age 20+ for correspondence, photo appreciated. James Everett, E Watch, Matelo HQ18GP, RAF Northwood, Middx. HA6 3EP

Male, into all good SF/fantasy fiction & media SF, astoundingly good taste in rock/classical music, seeks elegant, witty Glasgow female (20-35, no ties) with similar likes. Long chatty letters especially welcome! Mike, 7 Park Grove Terrace, Kelvingrove, Glasgow G3 7SD

Sci-fi fan 32 into *Star Trek, Aliens, Star Wars, X-Files, Highlander, Abyss, Blade Runner,* books, TV series (sci-fi), *Red Dwarf* & just about everything to do with sci-fi, so get writing, girls. Chris Taylor, 3 Hollybank Cl, Cowplain, Waterlooville, Hants. PO8 9ES

I want to get in touch with space opera fans all over the world. I collect SW & space opera material, videos, mags and the like. Hector Raul Pessina-Queen, Casilla (Postbox) 3869, Correo Central, 1000 Buenos Aires, Argentina

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Prisoner Official Society. Running 20 years, 2,000 members, enrolling 1996 subscriptions. SAE to: Six Of One, PO Box 66, Ipswich IP2 9T2. Honorary President Patrick McGoohan. Be seeing you!

Manopticon 4. The UK's biggest & best *Doctor Who* convention is back. Easter Weekend, 7th & 8th April 1996 at the Hotel Piccadilly, Manchester. Send SAE for more information to: Manopticon, 22 Seven Acres Lane, Norden, Rochdale, Lancs. OL12 7RL

CLUBS

Make contact with like-minded beings! "Encounter 3" is a non-profit-making penpal club for enthusiasts of the sci-fi/horror/cult genres. SAE for details to: D Morrison, 54 Argyle St, Alexandria G83 0QN

SF Newport needs you! We are a group of SF/fantasy/horror enthusiasts who meet fortnightly. Regular video meetings plus quizzes, book meetings, etc. Regular fanzine. Send SAE to: SF Newport, 38 Brynglas Rd, Newport, Gwent NP9 5QZ or phone ☎ (01633) 822203

Clubs for *Lois & Clark* & *Babylon 5!* Season three news, interviews, reviews, letters & much more in our quarterly newszines. For more info write to Daily Planet or BABCOM at: 14 Champion Grove, London SE5 8BW (Contributions welcome!)

Falkirk & Stirling Federation Sci-Fi & Cult TV deals with *X-Files, Doctor Who, Star Wars, Star Trek, B5, Blake,* etc. LG Meetings, 12 issues of news/fanzine The Neutron Flow. Membership £7. SAE to 65 Woodburn Ave, Redding, Falkirk.

New Mark Hamill Fan Club is offering quarterly newsletter & T-shirt to every new member. For more info write to: Mark Hamill Fan Club, PO Box 10, Santa Monica, CA 90406, USA

***seaQuest* fan?** Find out more about her new commander Oliver Hudson. Total Ironside is the newsletter for fans of Michael Ironside, now in its fourth great year! SAE for details. Merrivale Cottage, Merrivale Lane, Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire HR9 5JL

The X-mas Files! The Liverpool Society of Cult TV Christmas party on 16 December at the St George's Hotel. Entrance £2/£1.50 concs. For more info, write with SAE to 15 Harradon Rd, Walton, Liverpool L9 0HE

Starfleet Academy. Join this new *Star Trek* Fan Club & meet others like yourself who just love having fun. I Paton, 79 Main St, Rutherglew, Glasgow G73 2JQ

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Wirral Sci-Fi Group meets first Monday of every month, 8.30pm Crown Hotel, Conway St, Birkenhead, or write c/o 70 Cheviot Rd, B'head L42 6SF

M1SCELLANEOUS

What do you think about Stephen King's *The Stand?* I would like to hear anything you have to say about both the novel and the TV mini-series adaptation. Write to: Neil Colk, 3 Gristock Place, Norwich, Norfolk NR5 8YR

I am carrying out research into the popularity of science fiction. If anybody would be willing to assist by filling out a short questionnaire then I would be very grateful. Mark Stevens, Dept. of Sociology, Lancaster University, Lancaster LA1 4YL

If you are based in Milan, each Thursday between 10pm & 11pm Luigi Pachi broadcasts the SF programme *Delos* from Radio Atlanta FM 91.450 MHz, ☎ 39-2-317069 on air S.Sosio as well.

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Books 6 and 8 are paperbacks at £3.99 each.
Books 9 and 10 are hardbacks at £10.99 each.
All others are paperbacks at £4.99 each.

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PTW713	Next Generation Alien Profiles
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2729	Generations - Kirk and Picard
PTW711	Deep Space 9 Space Station
PTW697	Next Generation Crew Profiles
PTW698	Captain Picard

Star Wars

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PTW531	Star Wars
PTW532	Empire Strikes Back
PTW651	Space Battle

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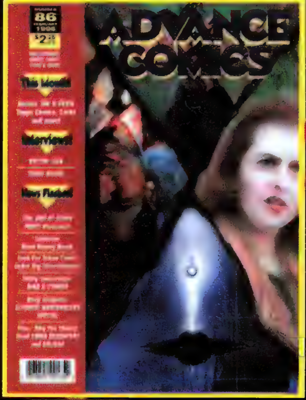

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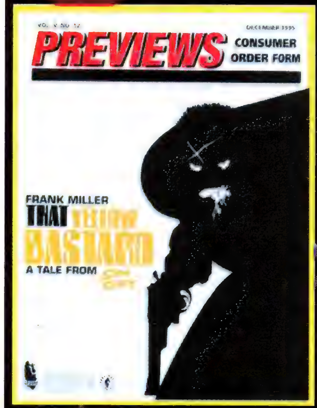

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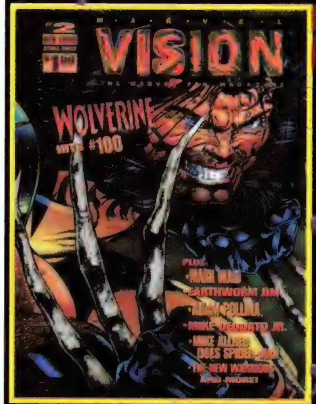

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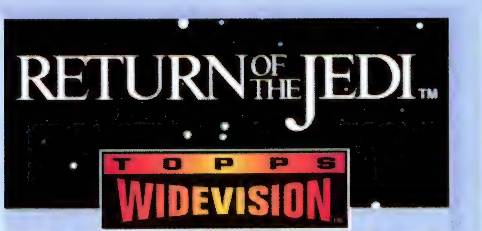

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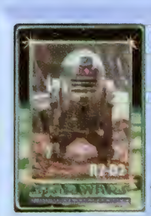

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NOVACON 25

CHAMBERLAIN HOTEL, BIRMINGHAM, 3-5 NOVEMBER

A QUARTER OF A CENTURY ON, AND BRITAIN'S "SECOND CONVENTION" IS STILL GOING STRONG. 400 FANS – AMONG THEM SFX'S **MJ SIMPSON** – MADE THEIR WAY TO BIRMINGHAM FOR THREE DAYS OF THE FOUR DIABOLICAL DS: DRINKING, DISCUSSION, DEALERS' ROOMS AND, ERM, DRINKING...

Four returning Guests of Honour – namely, Messrs. Banks, Shaw, Aldiss and Harrison – ensured that the Novacon 25 programme was both informed *and* entertaining. Also present were authors Tom Holt, Graham Joyce and John Brosnan, and Drs Jack Cohen and Ian Stewart. The loose theme was "humour in science fiction," which fitted in well with the traditionally light-hearted Novacon atmosphere.

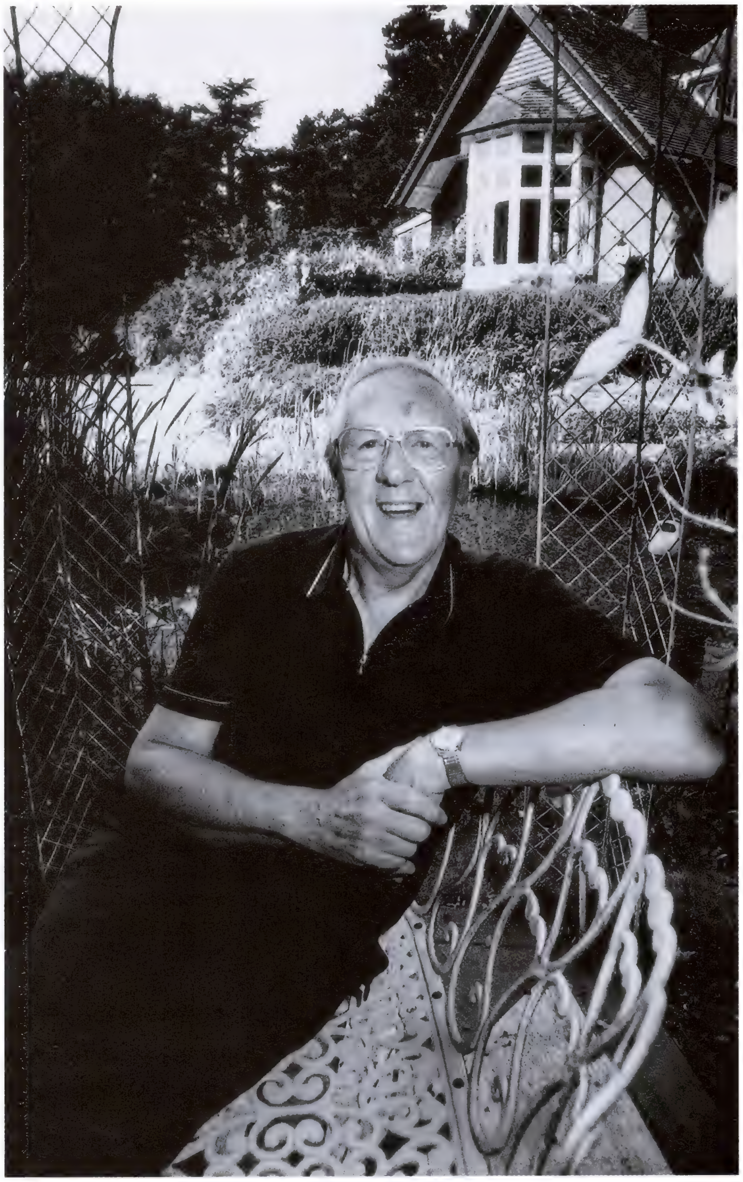
One of the weekend's highlights was a version of Room 101, in which Iain Banks and Graham Joyce consigned to the dumper such loathsome items as *Noel's House Party* and nests of coffee tables. Less successful was a series of "silly games" based around the various parts of a convention, which could have done with more planning.

Some excellent art and a few rare books were auctioned, and much money changed hands in the dealers' room, with a range of snazzy waistcoats selling like hot cakes. Parties were held, both planned and spontaneous, and a live band on the Friday night proved popular. The attendees included some who were veterans of every Novacon since its inception in 1971, and others who were new to the whole concept of con-going. Regardless, everyone seemed to enjoy themselves.

The Novas – annual awards for "Best Fanzine," "Best Fan Writer" and "Best Fan Artist" – were distributed, and, in a particularly touching move, a unique fourth Nova was awarded this year. Brian Burgess, a familiar face at the first 24 Novacons, has recently moved into a retirement home, and thus can no longer attend cons – so Novacon 25 named him "Best Fan."

Roll on, Novacon 26!

> **"One of the highlights was a version of Room 101, in which Iain Banks and Graham Joyce consigned to the dumper such loathsome items as *Noel's House Party* and nests of coffee tables."**



Brian Aldiss: Brum SF Group Honorary President, SFX interviewee – and Novacon guest!

Ed Bishop of *UFO* fame was one of the many guests at this year's Cult TV convention.

CULT TV

HAVEN HOLIDAY CENTRE, GREAT YARMOUTH, 27-30 OCTOBER

THE SECOND CULT TV WEEKEND HAD LOTS OF VIDEOS, MANY GUESTS, MARATHON TREKS BETWEEN DEALERS' ROOMS, AND ORGANISATIONAL SNAFUS, REPORTS **GARY STARR...**

If you're of the opinion that TV programmes "ain't what they used to be," then Cult TV is your kind of event. Four video rooms, running 24 hours a day, brought attendees everything from *Crossroads* to *Space: Above and Beyond;* old favourites like *The Prisoner, Hancock's Half Hour* and Gerry Anderson's *Four Feather Falls;* and the latest imported episodes of US favourites *seaQuest, The X-Files, Voyager,* and *DS9.* There were a few oddities around too, including the pilots for the proposed US version of *Red Dwarf* and *Knight Rider 2010* – a show that looks, amazingly, worse than the original!

So with a huge list of guests (*The X-Files'* Mitch Pileggi and Nicholas Lea, Ed Bishop, Annette Andre, and Ingrid Pitt to name a few), plus over 700 attendees, and more videos than you could shake a stick at, it should have been quite difficult to make this convention anything but a total success, right? Difficult, yes, but not impossible...

For a start, the site was *vast.* The distance between Video Room One to the Main Hall was about half a mile; and the Dealers' Room Two a good half mile further on still. (Since there were no signs indicating where it was, most visitors didn't even bother trying to find it anyway...)

The accommodation, although better than last year's, was still cold and damp. And in the video rooms – also cold, there being no heating because the camp is designed for Summer use – confusion reigned supreme. Often the wrong episode was shown, or even a completely different programme because the schedule had been changed yet again. The noticeboard was updated every two minutes, but it was almost always way behind.

It got worse. Saturday night's awards ceremony started an hour and a half late – because the committee had sent all the guests to dinner – while the audience were treated to the ceremony's video presentations in fast-forward and reverse several times, so that when the awards finally happened there were few surprises left (least of all being that *The X-Files* nabbed every award going).

Sunday was even more of a fiasco. The Fancy Dress entrants didn't know where to go, and the judges didn't know where to sit. And when it was time to judge the Art Show, some genius turned off the lights so we could watch a video, leaving the judges to view the various entries by torchlight!

Despite the complete lack of organisation, if you just stayed in the Video Rooms with a hot water bottle and weren't too fussy about what you watched, you would have enjoyed this event much more than me. But I've been to two Cult TVs now – and I feel I've paid my debt to society...

FANTASTIC DAYS

Dates for your diary

All conventions listed here are non-profit-making events organised by fans, unless otherwise stated. Always enclose an SAE with enquiries. Con organisers, if your con is not here or your listing is wrong, send details to Live!, SFX, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, Avon BA1 2BW.

2-4 February 1996
Starbase 96
Trek con at Hilton National, Leeds. **Miss Carol Looby, 152 Otley Rd, Headingly, Leeds LS16 5JX**

4 February 1996
Picocon 13
Minicon at Imperial College. Stephen Baxter, Chris Priest, Robert Holdstock. **Imperial College SF Society, Beit Quad, Prince Consort Rd, London SW7 2BB** or **icsf@ic.ac.uk**

10-11 February 1996
Star Fleet Ball
Trek con at Royal Bath Hotel, Bournemouth. Anne Lindup, **"Five Elms," Holtwood, Nr Wimborne, Dorset BH21 7DT**

9-10 March 1996
Brave New World
Trek con at Caerleon College, South Wales. Andrew Robinson. **A Pugh, 2 Ferndale Rd, Tylorstown, Rhondda CF43 3HB**

15-17 March 1996
The Neutral Zone
Trek con at Forte Crest Hotel, Newcastle. Bjo Trimble. **16 Annandale, Darlington, Co. Durham DL1 3QX**

29-31 March 1996
48 Hours in Space
TVSF marathon at **Comfort Friendly Inn, Hull. Hull Starfleet, PO Box 1701, Hull HU4 7YU**

5-8 April 1996
Evolution
47th National SF Con (Eastercon) at Radisson Edwardian Hotel, Heathrow. The important one. Vernor Vinge, Colin Greenland, Bryan Talbot, Jack Cohen. **13 Lindfield Gdns, Hamstead, London NW3 6PX** or **bmh@ee.ic.ac.uk** or **http://www.tardis.ed.ac.uk/~simon/evolve/**

6-8 April 1996
Generations II
Professional, profit-making *Star Trek* event at Royal Albert Hall, London. Leonard Nimoy, James Doohan, George Takei, Walter Koenig.. **Stargazer Productions International, 4 Aspenwood House, Ipsley St, Redditch B98 7AR**

7-8 April 1996
Manopticon 4
Doctor Who con, featuring launch of "Ace" book. **22 Seven Acres Lane, Norden, Rochdale, Lancs. OL12 7RL**

12-14 April 1996
Accelerate 96
Quantum Leap con at Radisson Edwardian, Heathrow. John D'Aquino. **78 Sterry Rd, Dagenham, Essex RM10 8NT** or **Accelerate@pbayliss.demon.co.uk** or **☎ (01827) 64911**

2-6 May 1996
Warp Two
41st UK *Trek* con at Cardiff International Arena. Robert Picardo, Nana Visitor, Mark Lenard, Richard Arnold. **David Simons, Warp Two, 69 Merlin Cres, Edgeware, Middx HA8 6JB**

12 May 1996
Sixth Cambridgeshire Fantasy Film Fair
Peterborough SF Club event at Cresset Exhibition Centre, Bretton, Peterborough. **Bruce King, The Hallards, Eaton Socon, St. Neots, Cambs. PE19 3QW**

24-27 May 1996
Inconsistent
SF humour con at Scotch Corner Hotel, Darlington. **Flat 1, 31 Saxon Rd, South Norwood, London SE25 5EQ**

28-30 June 1996
Discworld Convention 1996
Pratchett con at Britannia Sachas Hotel, Manchester. **PO Box 3086, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 6LD** or **discworld@cmacleod.demon.co.uk**

5-7 July 1996
Constitution III
Trek con at Tollgate Motel, Gravesend, Kent. **Tina Hewett, 115 The Brent, Dartford, Kent DA1 1YH**

12-15 July 1996
Albacon '96
Scottish national convention at Central Hotel, Glasgow. Harlan Ellison, Terry Pratchett, David A Hardy. **Flat 1/2, 10 Atlas Rd, Springburn, Glasgow G21 4TE** or **albacon@srian.demon.co.uk**

23-26 August 1996
Concorde
42nd UK *Trek* con at Radisson Edwardian, Heathrow. **Concorde Registrations,138 Crosslands, Stantonbury, Milton Keynes MK14 6DF**

30 August-1 September 1996
Dimension Jump '96
Red Dwarf Fan Club convention at Daventry Hotel, Daventry. **40 Pitford Rd, Woodley, Reading, Berks RG5 4QF**

13-15 September 1996
Lightspeed '96
Trek con at Leeds Hilton National. Andrew Robinson, Jack Cohen. Lightspeed Conventions, **16 Bramwell St, Rotherham, South Yorks. S65 1RZ**

25-28 October 1996
Cult TV 1996
Classic & obscure videos, plus guests, at **Haven Centre, Caister. PO Box 1701, Peterborough PE1 1EX**

26-27 October 1996
Who's 7 Strikes Back!
Doctor Who/B7 con at Ashford International Hotel, Ashford. **10 Fillebrook Hall, Fillebrook Rd, Leytonstone, London E11 1AG** or **lexin@cix.compulink.co.uk**

8-10 November 1996
Novacon 26
Annual SF con at Ibis Hotel, Birmingham. David Gemmell. **14 Park St, Lye, Stourbridge, West Mids DY9 8SS**

28-31 March 1997
Intervention
The '97 Eastercon. Brian Aldiss, Jon Bing, Octavia Butler. **12 Crowsbury Close, Emsworth, Hants PO10 7TS** or **intervention@pompey.demon.co.uk**

24-26 May 1997
Fantasticon UK
Media/literary con at Harrogate International Conference Centre. **38 Planetree Ave, Fenham, Newcastle upon Tyne NE4 9TH**

22-25 August 1997
Terok Nor
44th UK ***Trek*** con at Radisson Edwardian, Heathrow. **43 Eastern Ave, Polegate, East Sussex BN26 6HG**

30 October-2 November 1997
1997 World Fantasy Convention
UK World Fantasy Con celebrating *Dracula* centenary, at International Hotel, London Docklands. **PO Box 31, Whitby, N Yorks YO22 4YL**

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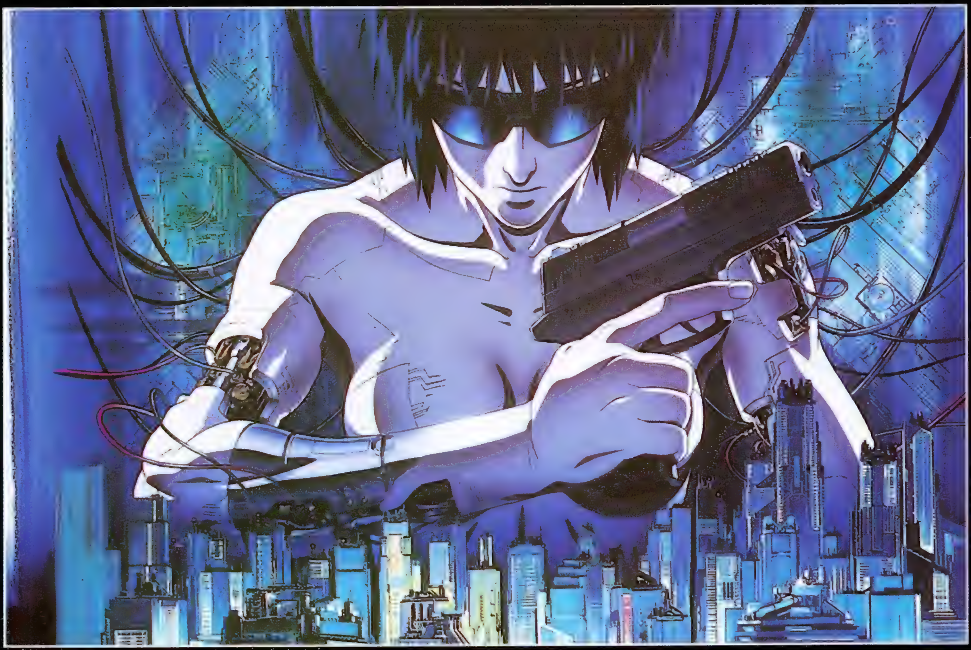


(Above) Two original animation cels from Mamoru Oshii's spectacular *Ghost in the Shell* are up for grabs this month!

(Below) You and a friend/lover/partner can win a pair of tickets (plus two T-shirts) to the superb *Star Trek* Exhibition, which is now on at the Science Museum in London, and finishes on 25 February.

Ghost In The Cel Compo

It's the greatest (all right, second best) example of Japanese anime ever and the first to get a proper UK theatrical release since *Akira!* It's Mamoru Oshii's *Ghost in the Shell* and we've got yer actual mega-prize to give away, courtesy of those fine folk at Manga Entertainment, who co-produced the movie. In other words, two original animation cels from this top piece of animation – a whole 1/12 of a second! – and you could win one. These are not copies, they are actual cels from the movie. There are only a handful in the country, and they're worth about £200 each.

To be in with a chance of winning one of these completely mondo collector's items, tell us this: Who created the original manga on which *Ghost in the Shell* is based?

Mark your entry Ghost in the Cel Compo.

Broadcasting Across The Galaxy Compo

If you've read this issue's feature on radio SF (see page 46), you may be wondering how you can get to listen to some of these classic series. Well, wonder no more! The BBC Radio Collection has kindly given us a bumper bundle of radio SF to give away to one lucky SFX reader. The contents are as follows: *Journey into Space: The Red Planet & The World in Peril; Earthsearch; Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy: The Primary Phase & The Secondary Phase; The Adventures of Superman & TAOS: Doomsday and Beyond; Batman: Knightfall;* and *The Amazing Spider-Man.* Plus readings of four *Doctor Who* stories: *Planet of the Daleks, The Curse of Peladon, Warriors of the Deep,* and *Attack of the Cybermen!* That's nigh on 40 hours of science fiction listening material!

To win the lot, tell us who voiced "The Book" in both the radio and TV incarnations of *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy,* and mark your entry Broadcasting Across the Galaxy Compo.

Trek Or Treat Compo

Have you been to see the completely brill *Star Trek* Exhibition at the Science Museum yet? It's got loads of original props and costumes from all four TV series (and all seven films), and it finishes on 25 February. We have five pairs of tickets to give away to SFX readers, along with ten *"Star Trek* – The Exhibition" T-shirts for the winners and their chums. To win two tickets and two T-shirts, then, just tell us who directed *Star*

Trek – The Motion Picture. Please mark your entry Trek Or Treat Compo.

(NB. We will send out the prizes as soon as we've drawn the winners, so you will have a month in which to visit the exhibition.)

Vulcan Identity Crisis Compo

First, he wasn't Spock, and now he is Spock. Just what is going on, Mr Nimoy? Well, after reading our in-depth SFX Interview, starting on page 20, you might have a better idea what Mr Nimoy's on about, but if you're still a little unclear as to what the man's final take on Spock is, enter this compo and listen to the man tell you himself. That's right, the cool folk at Random House Audiobooks have kindly given us 20 copies of the *I Am Spock* talking book to give away. It's four hours long (slightly abridged) on four cassettes, and it's read by (genuflect here) Leonard himself. To win one, just tell us the names of Spock's parents.

Mark your entry Vulcan Identity Crisis Compo.

Hardy Annual Compo

If you're a fan of science fiction cinema, then you need a good reference work that covers the entire genre in detail, and they don't come much better than Phil Hardy's *Aurum Film Encyclopedia* (reviewed on page 86). Now updated to include the likes of *Stargate* and *TimeCop*, the new paperback edition sells for 25 quid in the shops, but we have three copies to give away for free.

To win one, just tell us who directed the classic 1902 film *La Voyage Dans la Lune*. Mark your entry Hardy Annual Compo.

Send all your competition entries to:

[Compo name]
SFX
Future
Publishing
30 Monmouth St
Bath, Avon
BA1 2BW

Those ridiculous but important rules and regulations in full...

1. All entries should come on the back of a postcard or piece of paper – one for each competition you enter.
2. No multiple entries please.
3. The closing date for all competitions is **Wednesday 31 January.**
4. Winners' names will be published in the **March** issue, on sale **Tuesday 27 February**
5. No correspondence will be entered into concerning the competitions. The judges' decision is final and there are no cash alternatives.

AND THE W1NNERS FROM SFX5 ARE...

FIFTEEN SECONDS TO COMPLY COMPO
RoboCop 3 was directed by Fred Dekker. Three *Robocop: The Series* vids, courtesy of One On One Video, to each of the following: TR Trigg, Staffs; D McLauchlan, Clydebank; Scott Kibby, Boston; Trevor Elwes, Norwich; I Bousfield, Chester; M Healy, Birkenhead; Philip Loder, Burnley; Mrs L Bird, Norfolk; Damon Smith, Watford; Thomas Adams, Manchester.

HOORAY FOR HARTNELL COMPO
William Hartnell was in *Carry On Sergeant*. T-shirts from The Black T-Shirt Design Company to: D Kirkland, Glasgow; Thomas Adams, Manchester; Damon Smith, Watford; Dean Geoghegan, Sutton; Nigel Mably, Bridgend; Graham Anderson, Glasgow; Christopher Lomas, Cheltenham; Karl Bastian, Malvern; David Sawtell, Weston-Super-Mare; J Telfer, Musselburgh.

GIVE US A CLUTE COMPO
John Clute co-wrote *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* with Peter Nicholls. Copies of Dorling Kindersley's *Science Fiction: The Illustrated Encyclopedia* to: Gidon Mount, London; Scott Kibby, Boston; IR Maddison, Co. Durham; Gavin Booth, Jersey; Donald Ridley, Poole.

GERRY ANDERSON: WE'RE NOT WORTHY! COMPO
Puppetmeister and all-round marionette pioneer Gerry Anderson's first live-action series was either *UFO* or *The Secret Service*, depending on how you look at it, but since we specified Unwinian involvement, the latter answer was, in fact, the correct one. Copies of Polygram Video's *Space Precinct* Vols.1 & 2 to: Clay Sandford, Driffield; May Oliver, Houghton; Steven Denny, Surrey; Lee Potts, Wakefield; Richard Underwood, Shrewsbury.

I WAS A TEENAGE KLEGG COMPO
The main East Meg attack ships were called Strato-Vs. A pair of Polygram's *Judge Dredd* CDs and a signed *Judge Dredd* radio script to: Richard Vallance, Fife. *Judge Dredd* CDs/cassettes to: John Warnock, Co. Down; Colin Parfitt, Bristol; Mr Mike Lord, Wantage; Tony Richards, Hemel Hempstead; Mr RG Baxter, Wetherby; Mark Lewis, Bournemouth; Julian Bignell, Stonehouse; Paul Davies, Hucknall; Lee Van Russell, London.

30 DAYS INTO THE FUTURE...

Coming next month in SFX

BABYLON 5

Barring accidents, acts of God (or JMS, as we call him round here) or an alien invasion, issue 9 of SFX will do for *Babylon 5* what issue 4 did for *The X-Files*. Join us for an insider's look at the long-awaited season three next issue...

The Shadows are coming... Delenn (Mira Furlan, left) and the enigmatic Kosh deliberate on the dark turn of events at the end of season two.

JG BALLARD

As filming of *Crash* – his pornographic car crash novel – progresses in Canada, SFX caught up with JG Ballard, author of *The Drowned World*, *The Crystal World*, *High-Rise* and *The Unlimited Dream Company* among others, and undoubtedly one of the most important science fiction writers of the century. If you've always wanted to know who's his favourite *Blake's 7* character (!) you can't afford to miss next issue...

PLUS!

The story behind the big screen version of *Johnny Mnemonic*, science fiction on the Internet, and lots more...

SFX9: ON SALE TUESDAY 30 JANUARY

KEEP YOUR EYES PEELED!

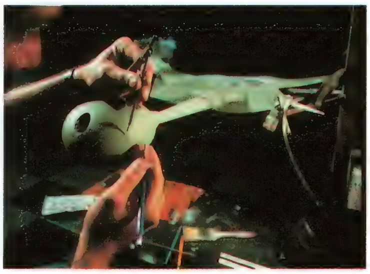
STAR TREK THE MOTION PICTURE

WHEN PARAMOUNT FINALLY DECIDED TO TURN ITS CULT TV SERIES INTO A FULLY-FLEDGED BIG-BUDGET MOTION PICTURE, IT HADN'T BARGAINED ON OVER-SPENDING TO THE TUNE OF NEARLY $30 MILLION...

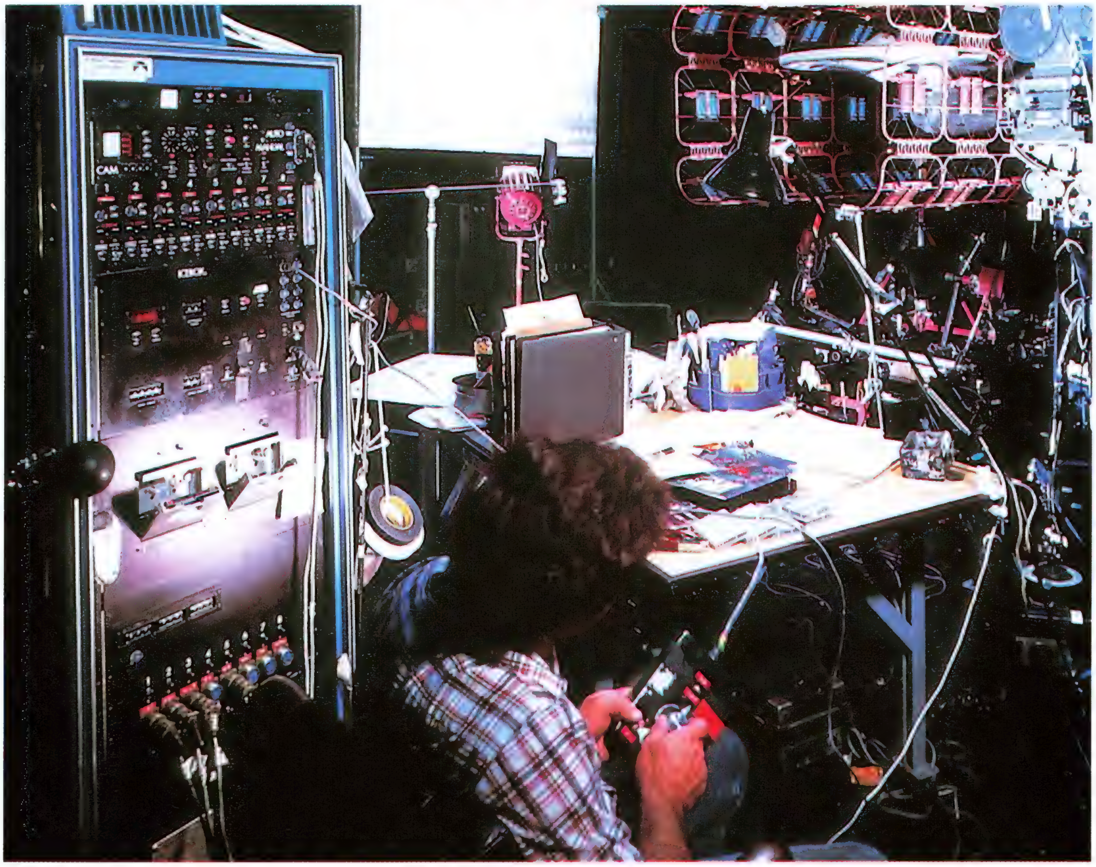
It was the series that refused to die. After Paramount killed off the original *Star Trek* in 1969, rumours of its resurrection refused to go away (mainly fuelled, according to George Takei, by Walter Koenig). After a short-lived animated version in 1974, and the aborted *Star Trek: Phase II* TV series in 1977, *Star Trek* finally returned in 1979 as a motion picture. A big motion picture. Make that a huge motion picture. In terms of budget, anyway.

At the original press conference, Paramount announced a budget of $15 million. The final total came in at nearer $44 million, although a lot of that was attributable to what Paramount had already spent on *Phase II*. However, the fact the company originally brought in to handle the film's sfx requirements had produced millions of dollars worth of unusable material didn't help. In desperation, the producers turned to Douglas *(2001)* Trumbull, who had to redo everything from scratch.

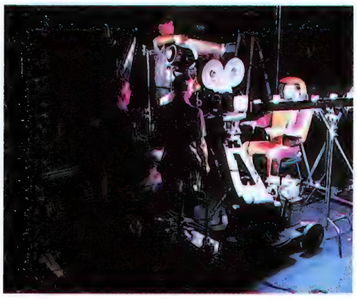
In the end, most people's view of the film was, "impressive effects, shame about the plot," and it quickly earned the nickname *"Star Trek: The Slow Motion Picture."* But whatever the flaws, it did manage to kickstart a whole series of movies and three new *Star Trek* series...



Left: A Klingon warbird, to be destroyed near the beginning of the film, gets a paint job. In the original *Trek* series, Klingons flew "warbirds" and Romulans had "Birds of Prey," but after *Star Trek III* this was swapped round. Why? Well, the original script for *III* featured a Romulan ship, but when it was changed to Klingon no-one noticed that they'd forgotten to swap the name. Doh!



Right: This spacedock was originally designed for *Phase II* as a way of explaining why the new Enterprise looked so different to its predecessor in the original series. The concept was then carried over into the movie. Magicam built the final model.



Above: Director Robert Wise (left), who could hardly claim to be an auteur with films as diverse as *The Sound of Music, The Hindenberg* and *The Day the Earth Stood Still* to his credit, supervises the controversial Spock spacewalk sequence. Nimoy was initially not keen on the idea of Spock having a "nervous breakdown."

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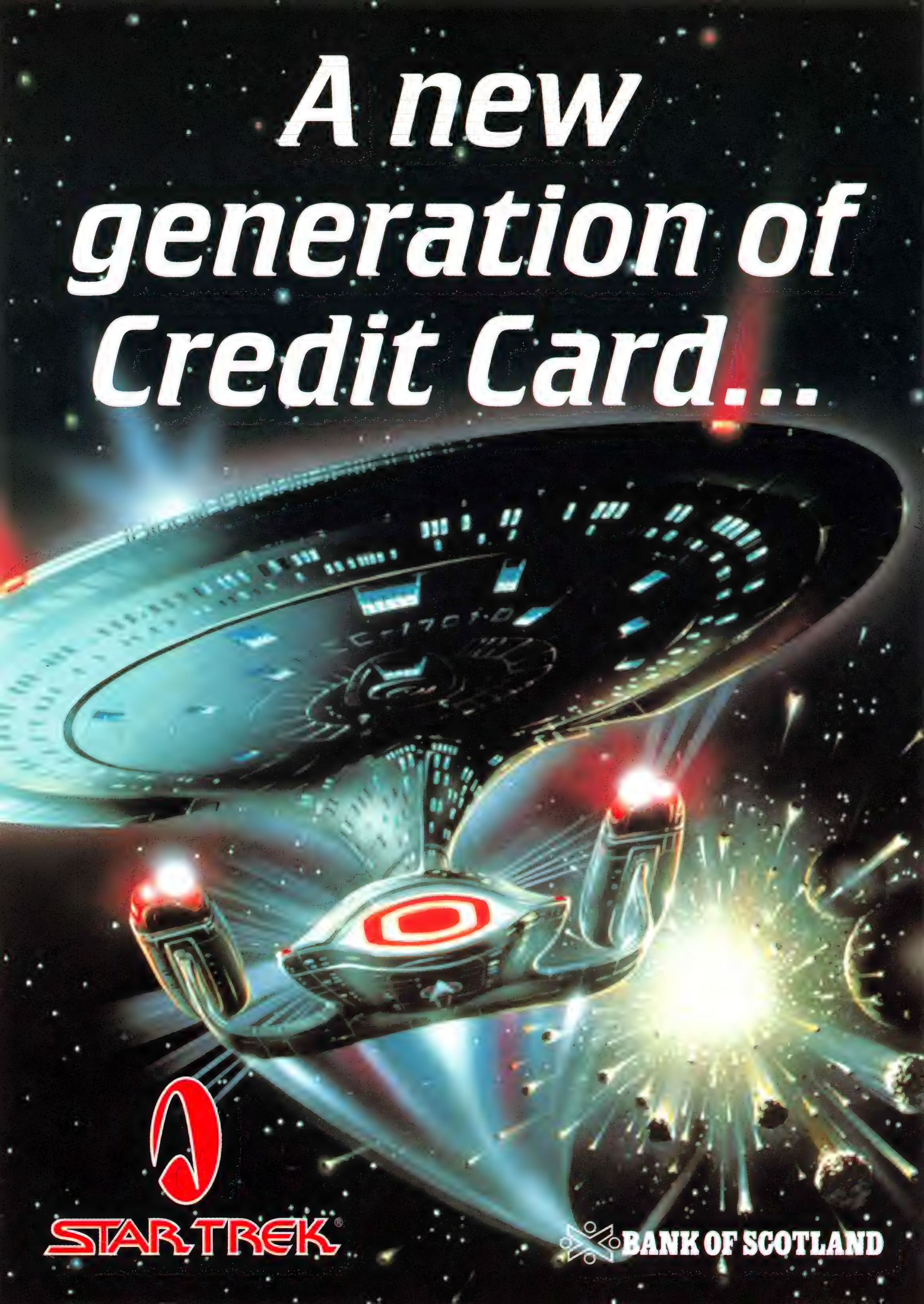
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CLASSIC STAR TREK

CLASSIC FIGURE ASSORTMENT

The first highly collectable Classic *Star Trek* action figure series featuring crew members and villains from the *Star Trek* movies. Each figure is attired in authentic outfits, equipped with detailed accessories and individually numbered as a hallmark of collectability. The first assortment consists of Admiral Kirk, Spock, McCoy, Sulu and Uhura from *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*, Khan from *The Wrath of Khan* and the shape shifter from *The Undiscovered Country*.

Classic Collector Figure Set

CLASSIC
STAR TREK
7 AUTHENTIC ARTICULATED REPRODUCTIONS OF THE ORIGINAL STAR TREK CREW

Collect the original cast of characters from the original *Star Trek* show! This highly collectable, limited edition set comes complete with entire bridge crew of seven articulated figures. Authentic reproductions of Captain Kirk, First Officer Spock, Chief Medical Officer McCoy, Navigator Chekov, Helmsman Sulu, Communications Officer Uhura and Chief Engineer Scotty. Each set is individually numbered and packaged in a handsome window box replica of the original bridge.

Classic Enterprise™ NCC-1701

The original USS Enterprise 1701 is here! Complete in every detail, this classic vessel features lights and sounds from the original TV series. Proudly displayed on its Starfleet base, this flagship of the Federation is designed to be one of the most valued and sought-after collectables in the annals of *Star Trek* products. And now you can join the millions of collectors all over the world by celebrating this classic craft in all its glory. For, indeed, the Classic Enterprise has become an icon of a *Star Trek* generation. ***Supplied with three 'AA' replaceable batteries.***

USS ENTERPRISE
NCC-1701

CLASSIC COMMUNICATOR™

"Come in, Enterprise!" It's the original *Star Trek* Communicator with its unique flip up design, perfect for collectors! This exciting role playing accessory is an authentic reproduction of the Classic *Star Trek* Communicator from the original *Star Trek* TV series. Every detail is intact: metallized antenna grill, three realistic sounds and an emergency LED light. Finally, the USS Enterprise will be able to lock onto your signal! ***Supplied with two 'AA' replaceable batteries.***

CLASSIC PHASER™

This famous Phaser from the original *Star Trek* TV show is every Trekker's dream. And now you can beam down to the alien planet with complete confidence and security. But before you go, you can practice by squeezing off a few blasts with the first original *Star Trek* Phaser with working lights and sounds – set on stun mode, of course! Two original phaser sounds (stun and higher setting) and light up beam emitter. ***Supplied with two 'AA' replaceable batteries.***

CLASSIC TRICORDER ®

The Classic Tricorder was a multipurpose instrument widely used throughout Starfleet, circa 2366. These earlier models were standard use for landing parties on away missions. Capable of scanning, computing and recording several million pieces of data at a time, the Classic Tricorder quickly became an indispensable tool. This replica includes three sounds from the original series and light up view screen and display indicators. ***Supplied with two 'AA' replaceable batteries.***

STAR TREK® THE NEXT GENERATION™

STAR TREK®: THE NEXT GENERATION FIGURES

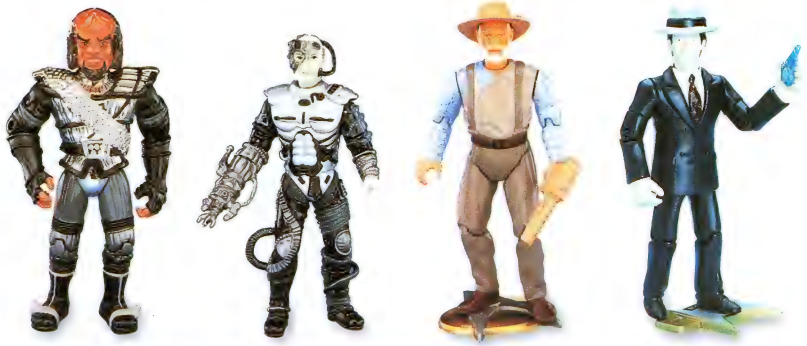

FIGURE ASSORTMENT

The ultimate space adventure continues with the most exciting and astronomical roster of galactic heroes and fascinating aliens ever. Each one of these highly collectable, individually numbered 10.5 cm action figures comes supplied with their own unique inter-galactic space accessories, Skybox™ Playmates collectors card and display stand. Kids and collectors alike can join ranks with the entire crew of the USS Enterprise as well as seek out new and fascinating aliens. Look out for new figures which are constantly being added to this range!

SPACE TALK™ SERIES FIGURES

Your favourite characters from *Star Trek: The Next Generation* can now talk directly to you! Simply press the button on each figure's back and you'll hear the voice of the actual character from the TV show! Each 17.5cm character says three popular phrases from the series, and is supplied with their own space accessories. Figures currently available include Commander William Riker, Q, Captain Picard and Borg.

STAR TREK®: THE NEXT GENERATION™ ROLE PLAY ITEMS

TYPE I PHASER™

Special issue to senior officers of Starfleet, the Type I Phaser is more compact in size than the standard phaser, but discharges the same amount of energy. There are two settings: stun, which is capable of incapacitating the central nervous systems of most known life forms; and disruption, a last resort setting which disrupts all matter in its path. And now all the power and responsibility is in your hands!

Supplied with two 'AA' replaceable batteries.

TYPE II PHASER™

Powerful enough to penetrate the strongest alloy or defence armour, the Phaser is standard equipment for all Starfleet officers – and for all *Star Trek* fans as well. Strong and durable, the Phaser features two different settings, with light up phaser beam from the *Star Trek: The Next Generation* TV series. Simply press the Phaser activation button and a flash of phaser light beams into action. With all these features, the Phaser is Starfleet's versatile defensive weapon of choice.

Supplied with two 'AA' replaceable batteries.

GEO
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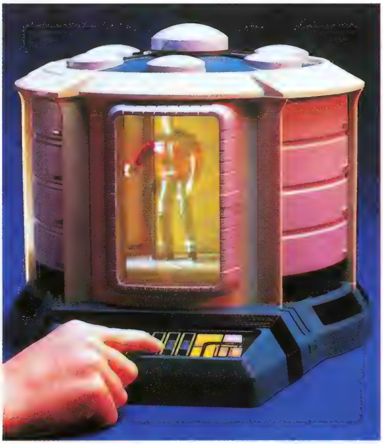
ID

TRICORDER™

When the crew is on an away mission, their main link to the ship's computer is through the highly versatile Tricorder. And now you can scan and analyse information from all over the galaxy. Just spring open the Tricorder and analyse the audible frequencies. By engaging the touch sensitive buttons, you activate working lights and authentic sounds from the *Star Trek: The Next Generation* TV series.

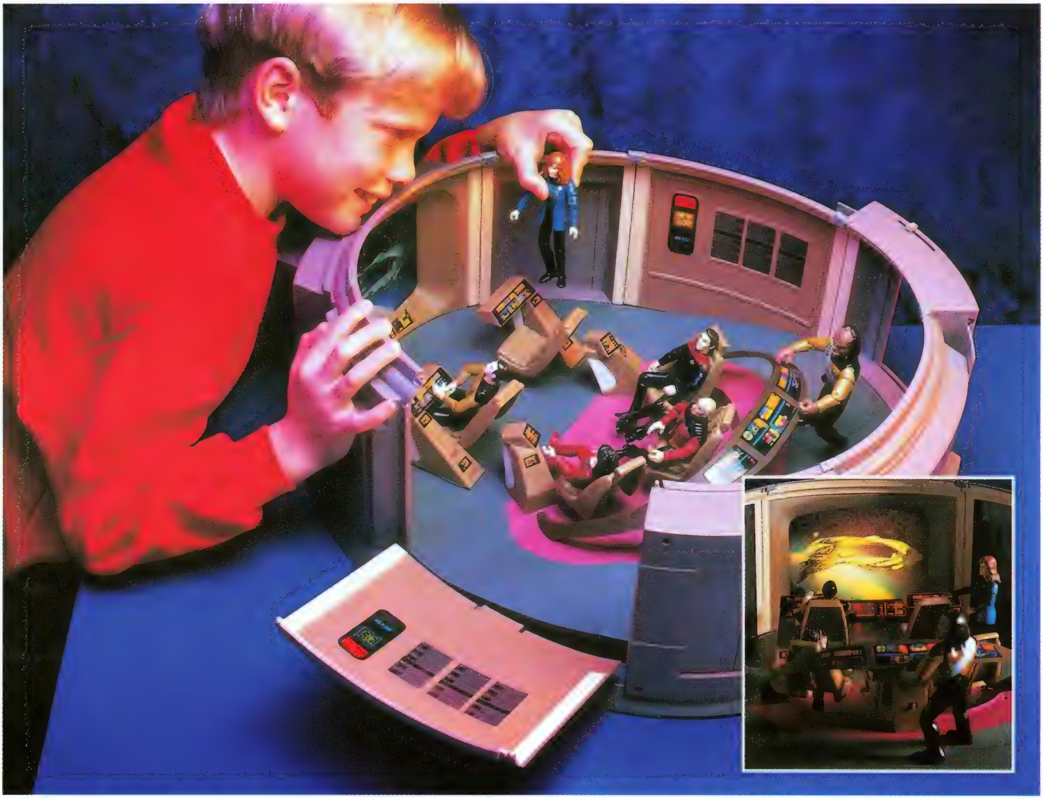
Supplied with two 'AA' replaceable batteries.



TRANSPORTER™

Use the Transporter to 'transport' figures to and from remote areas, just like in the *Star Trek: The Next Generation* TV series. You can beam your action figures in and out and watch them disappear and reappear. It's truly amazing! This highly detailed, battery powered replica of the Transporter features real transporting lights and sounds, an authentic control panel and view window. Get ready to energise!

Requires three 'C' batteries, not supplied. Figures not supplied.



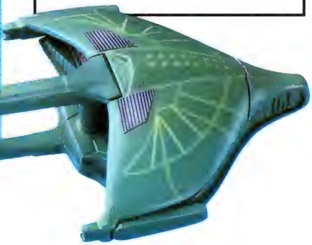
BRIDGE PLAYSET™

It's the bridge of the USS Enterprise, and it's all yours! This huge galactic playset replica comes with a working tactical control station and eight authentic sounds from the *Star Trek: The Next Generation* TV series. That means you're in control of the whole Starship Enterprise: you decide when to warp out and when to fire the phasers or photon torpedoes. Like the real Enterprise bridge, this playset features a light-up view screen, working doors, conn and ops stations and three pivoting command seats. ***Requires three 'AA' batteries, not supplied. Figures not supplied.***

STAR TREK
THE NEXT GENERATION
INNERSPACE
SERIES

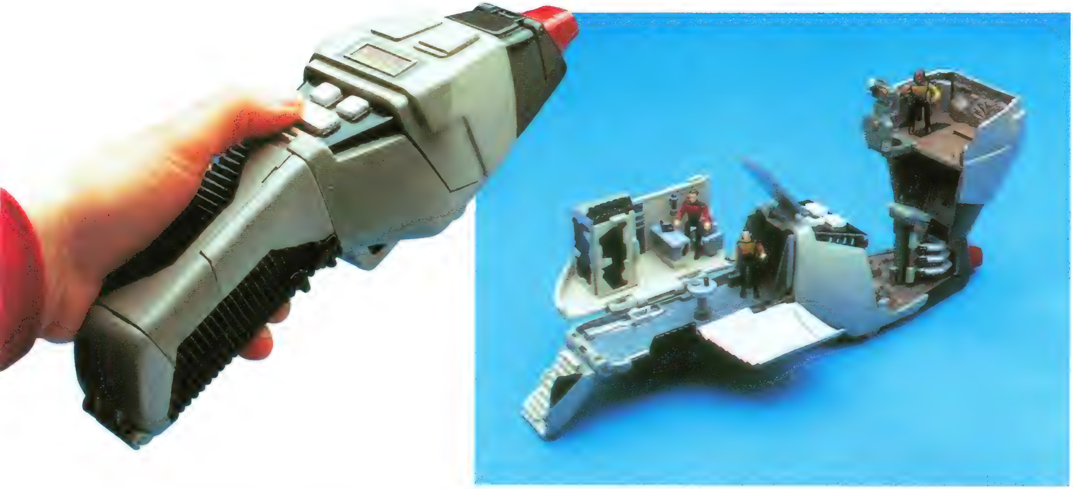
THE UNIVERSE HAS JUST GOTTEN SMALLER!

Now you can boldly go where no one has gone before! Your favourite characters, spaceships and planetary environments from *Star Trek: The Next Generation* have just gone mini. Mini articulated action figures of the Enterprise crew fit neatly inside mini spaceships, role-playing accessories and other playsets that open up into mini play environments. These mini playsets are authentic, fully-detailed replicas from the hit TV show. The whole *Star Trek: The Next Generation* world can fold up and follow you into any adventure. So warp speed ahead and engage!



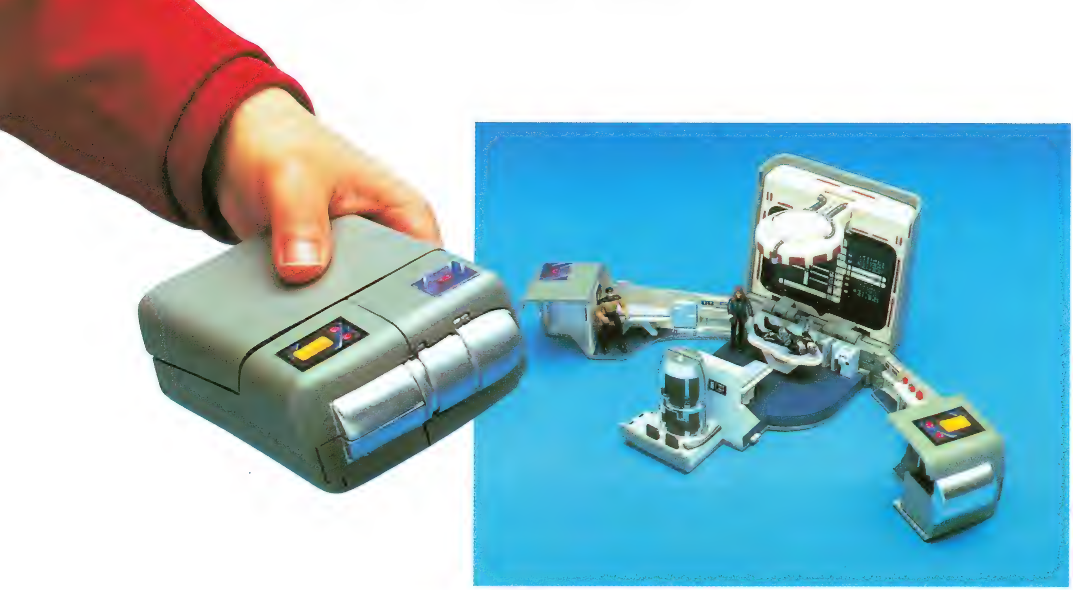
MINI SHIP PLAYSET ASSORTMENT

The adventure continues on a whole new scale! Highly detailed miniature replicas of the most popular ships from *Star Trek: The Next Generation* have landed. Take command of the Romulan Warbird and engage in battle with the Klingon Bird-of-Prey. The Shuttlecraft is your transport to the surface of alien planets. Or tap into the cybernetic collective on the Borg Ship. Each spacecraft opens to reveal a detailed reproduction of the vessel's interior. Each ship is also supplied with two mini action figures to help you take control of Inner Space!



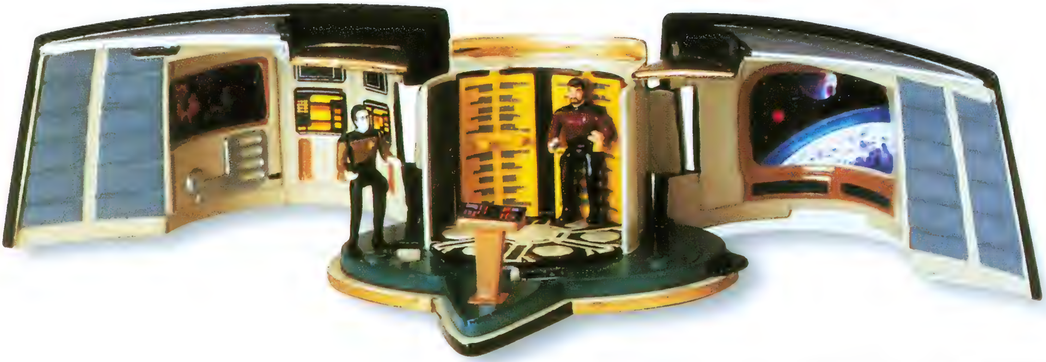
TYPE II PHASER™ MINI PLAYSET

Use the Type II Phaser as your only line of defence in a blast out with the Romulans – or open it up and be transported to the surface of an alien planet for a real close up view! This full-sized Phaser converts into a mini planetary play environment! Embark on a journey through unknown lands and cities, complete with detention cell, security force office, rebel cave and hidden trap doors. Venturing into alien lands is always an adventure with Worf, Data, and the unpredictable Q. Get ready to fire!



MEDICAL TRICORDER™ MINI PLAYSET

You are the Enterprise crew's only hope for survival. With this highly detailed replica of the Medical Tricorder, treatment facilities are at your disposal by opening the full-sized Tricorder to reveal a mini play environment depicting the ship's medical bay and bio lab. Special features include bio chamber, cryo-chamber bed, medical supply cart and medical display monitor, equipment you'll need to save the crew. Mini action figures of Geordi LaForge and Dr. Beverly Crusher provide you assistance in the medical bay as you examine mini action figure Captain Picard as Locutus.

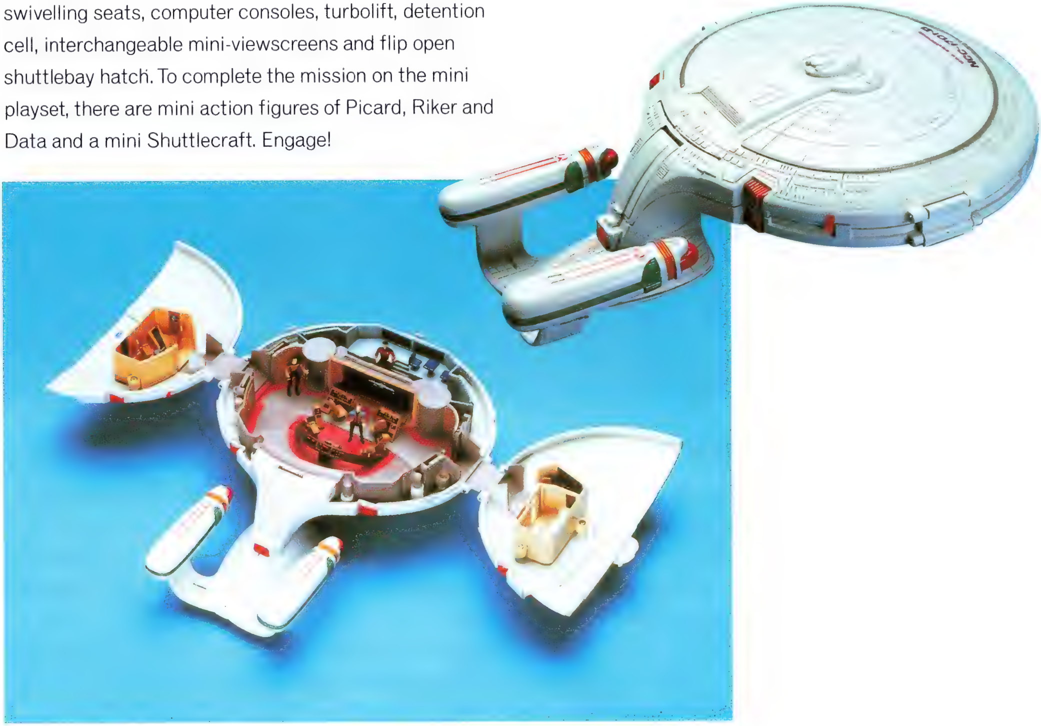


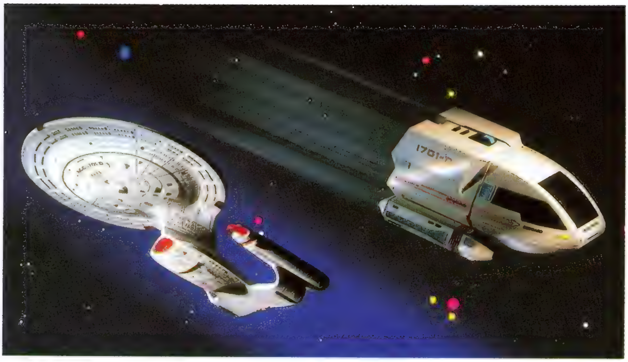
PERSONAL COMMUNICATOR™ MINI PLAYSET

Use the Personal Communicator to transmit messages from alien planets to the Starship Enterprise. Then open the Personal Communicator up to reveal the Enterprise transporter room, complete with working transporter pads. Watch as you energise Data and Riker down to the alien planet for another action packed intergalactic adventure. ***Includes mini figures of Commander Riker and Lt. Commander Data.***

USS ENTERPRISE™ MINI PLAYSET

It's the Federation's flagship, the Starship Enterprise, replicated into a fully detailed mini model, based on the designs as seen in the *Star Trek: The Next Generation* TV series. This 27cm replica of the Enterprise opens up to reveal five mini play environments: Command Bridge, Ten Forward Lounge, Captain's Ready Room, Brig and Shuttlebay. It also has extra features such as sliding doors, swivelling seats, computer consoles, turbolift, detention cell, interchangeable mini-viewscreens and flip open shuttlebay hatch. To complete the mission on the mini playset, there are mini action figures of Picard, Riker and Data and a mini Shuttlecraft. Engage!

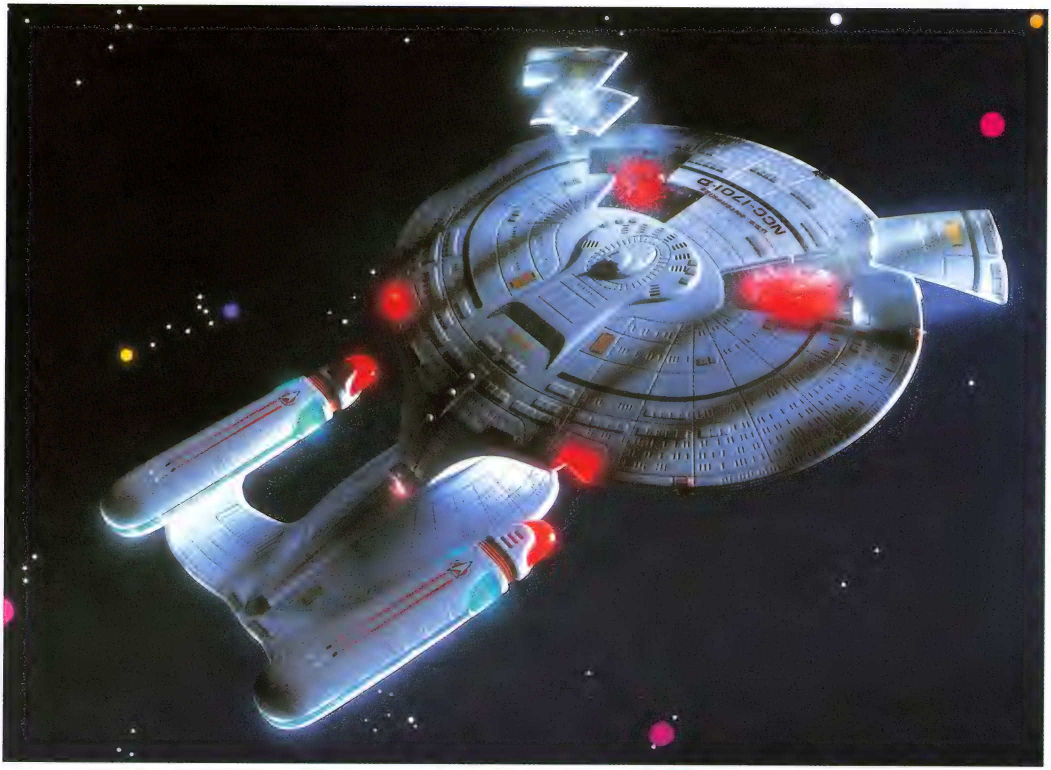




SHUTTLECRAFT GODDARD™

The Shuttlecraft Goddard is the latest and most advanced shuttlecraft in the Starfleet. Designed as a short range transportation vehicle, the Goddard can accommodate a small crew of three. And should you get into trouble, you can blast away the enemy with the built in phaser, or sub-light out of there with the extra powerful impulse engines!

Supplied with three 'AA' replaceable batteries. Figures not supplied.



BATTLE DAMAGED ENTERPRISE™

The Starship Enterprise. The flagship of the Federation. Now in the ultimate fight for her life! As seen in all her glory in the new film, *Star Trek: Generations*, the USS Enterprise NCC-1701-D takes on the notorious and powerful Klingon Bird-of-Prey. Firing photon torpedoes and trying to keep the ship's shields at full, the crew are on a decisive mission – to stop the treacherous Dr. Soran and his Klingon compatriots from destroying an entire solar system. All the while, they must manoeuvre around the mysterious Nexus Ribbon. This time the Enterprise meets a challenge that could be her last! Featuring real blow apart battle damage sections with flashing lights and explosive sound, three movie starship sounds (photon torpedo, warning signal and explosive sound), light-up nacelles, deluxe stand and technical blueprint.

Supplied wth three 'AA' replaceable batteries.

KLINGON ATTACK CRUISER™

One of the most feared warships in the known Universe is the deadly Klingon Attack Cruiser, and now it fits in your hands. Now you're in control of the Klingons' most fortified warship. You decide when to use some of the most advanced weapons of the 24th century, including the devastating forward-mounted disruptor cannon. And if you're anything like the real Klingons, you'll be firing plenty! This stunningly detailed replica has working engine lights and four authentic sounds taken from the *Star Trek: The Next Generation* TV series. Finally, the most powerful ship in the Klingon fleet can be yours!

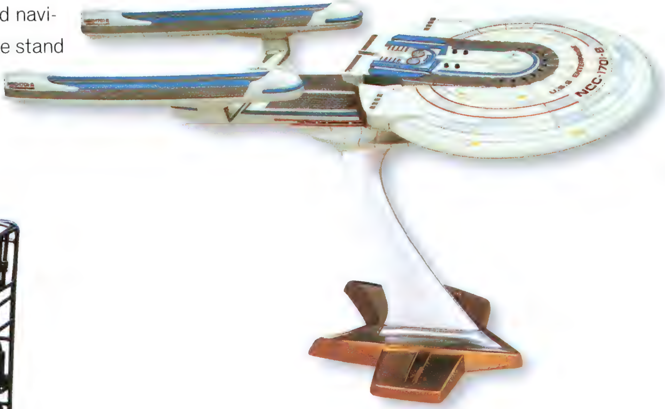
Supplied with three 'AA' replaceable batteries.

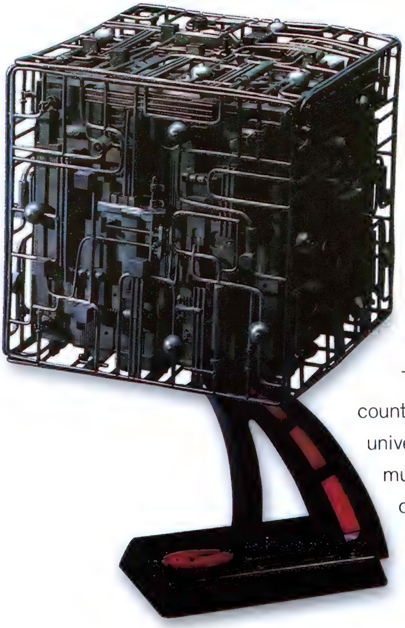
USS ENTERPRISE™ NCC-1701-B

The third Starfleet vessel to boldly display the name "Enterprise" is a stunning achievement of space engineering. Authorised by Starfleet Commands Advanced Starship Design Bureau and constructed in 2295, the space frame employs the pattern used for the USS Excelsior, the vessel nicknamed "The Great Experiment".

The USS Enterprise B was launched under the command of Captain Harriman to explore and chart the star systems in the Gourami Sector and regions beyond. This detailed replica has four authentic sounds, light-up engine exhausts and navigational deflector and is supplied with a deluxe stand and technical blueprint.

Supplied with three 'AA' replaceable batteries.





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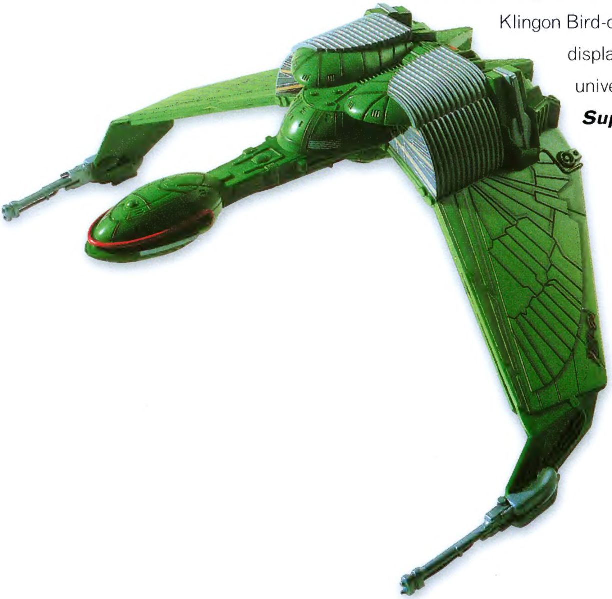

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